

Mark 8: 34-38; "The Exercise Room of Christian Discipleship",
Sermon # 64 in the series – "Astonished at His Teaching",
Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on March 14th, 2010,
in the Morning Worship Service.

We have now come to the last of the rooms of Christian Discipleship. It is the Exercise Room which is located on the lower level. We have been touring this House of Christian Discipleship, for 12 sermons now. Originally we came through the narrow gate of believing the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is just up the lane a piece from this house. We came up and we sat down on the porch, which is a picture of your desires as a young Christian. Our Lord Jesus Christ, when you take Him as your Savior, wants to know why you want to follow Him. What are your reasons and your motives for wanting to follow Him? He was sure that you wanted to be saved from your sins, because you had prayed to Him for this; but He would like to show you more of your own heart, and ask you each and every day; what do you want me to do for you here in this room of your life of discipleship? What will you be doing to glorify God with you life since He has given it back to you now; new and fresh, and free from sin? He has commanded you many things to observe and do, but He would also like to have you be a willing and eager follower, and not someone that He has to drag along with Him. He makes you willing in the day of His power, but He wants to know whether you will still be willing when you understand and see how much He needs to change in your heart, and in your life, for you to become like Him. He would like you to understand what it means to be His disciple and to count the cost before you promise Him anything. You see, that what was wrong with Peter. At the beginning of this study on discipleship we saw that Peter didn't understand that Jesus must go to the cross for him, before Peter could pick up his cross and follow Him. "If any man desires to follow me let him deny himself, pick up his cross and follow me." Jesus had to die so that Peter could have his desires to follow Him fulfilled. Have you learned this all-important lesson?

Well, after sitting on the porch awhile, we entered into this house and had a sight of the Living Room of Self-Denial. Then, you followed me into the Kitchen, the Dining Room, the Parlor, and the upstairs bedrooms. The last time we were together around this text we looked at the Upper Room Bathroom of Christian Discipleship and we saw that all of our thoughts, all of our words, and all of our works; our whole life; all that is related to flesh and spirit, needs to be cleansed and washed if we are to have a part with Christ. Even the best of our works, done from the highest of motives, still needs Christ's touch; His washing them from the impurities and from whatever sin might be found in them. Let me ask you if you really understand how perfect perfection is? Only Christ can fully understand it,

because He alone is perfect. Therefore, all of your works, thoughts and words need to have the touch of God's grace and Christ's cleansing upon them, so that God will accept them and be pleased with them. I hope that you understand this, because without understanding this, you may just become a legalist. A legalist is one who thinks that they are self-sufficient. They can do what God commands and they think that they can please Him in their own strength. They believe that their good works and their good thoughts and their good actions do not need Christ's blood and His washing applied to them. Discipleship, however, is humbling work. We must learn by the grace of Christ and by the Spirit's help, to humble ourselves to see that we need this daily cleansing. This is why there are bathrooms on all levels of this House. In every aspect of our discipleship we need Christ with us and working in us by His Spirit to give us grace and to help to bring about the changes in our lives which will bring us to the place where we can truly glorify God.

Now today, I hope that you will be able to remember all that we have seen on the other two levels, because I want you to go with me, now, downstairs to the basement. We are going down there because I want you to understand that you and I need to, every day, attempt to do something with all that we have been given by grace. You and I need to do something with all the spiritual truth that has been revealed to us if we are going to glorify God. There is a verse which I believe that we should turn to, so that we might understand what we are looking at here. It is 1 Timothy Chapter 4, and verses 7 and 8. "But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself towards godliness." "For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance." Take a look around you; you are in the Exercise Room. That spiritual flab has to go. You may have come to know many good things from the Word of God, and yet if you do not exercise, all that good food will do you no good. God expects you to exercise yourself toward godliness. So, first of all, in order to begin to exercise ourselves towards godliness there is something that we must reject. Then secondly, we will look at the truth that Godliness is profitable for all things in this life. Then, finally, we will look at the truth that godliness is profitable for all things because it has promise for the life to come. I hope that as you listen to this sermon, that you will pray to be eager in your mind and heart about these things; to glorify God by laying hold of that which is eternal life indeed.

1st – In order to be able to exercise yourself towards godliness there is something that you must reject. (Verse 7)

"But reject profane and old wives fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness." Now what is the Apostle talking about here, when he says, "profane and old wives fables". I think that we can understand it if we will simply look at the context of these verses, and look also at some other verses from this letter that he is writing. The context is set beginning at verse 1 where Paul is explaining to Timothy about some people who "give heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons." "Now the Spirit expressly says that in the latter times some will depart

from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth." "For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." "If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed." Exercising yourself toward godliness, we find here, is related to the doctrines that you receive, and live by, and teach to others. If you teach or hold to false doctrine, then it will lead you to false worship and ungodly practices in your life; both in word and deed. The particular thing that Paul is warning about here, was related to the antichristian practice which was beginning to develop in the days of the apostles and reached its height in the visible Church in the days before the Reformation; of people listening to the false teaching that people should not marry. If you would serve the Lord with all of your heart, and all of your strength, then be celibate these false teachers would say. That false doctrine has wreaked havoc in the Church all the way down through its history. You are supposedly more spiritual if you do not marry. It is plainly a false doctrine according to the Bible. "Marriage is honorable among all and the bed undefiled," it says in Hebrews 13: 4. It is fornicators and adulterers that God will judge. But the false teaching that people, if they wanted to be more spiritual, more holy, and more devoted to God; then they should not marry, actually has led many in the past, and many in our day to the place where they were secretly committing fornication and even homosexual practices. It is a false church which tells men who minister the Word of God, that they should not marry. Priests in the Roman Catholic church are instructed in this way, to take vows of celibacy. This kind of false thinking and reasoning began in Paul's day, and it is still with us today.

And another false doctrine that some within the visible Church were teaching; that was being propagated then, and is still today; was that only certain foods were clean, and that if you abstained from certain foods, then you were becoming a more godly person. If you were a vegetarian you were more spiritual. If you abstained from eating meat during Lent, and only ate fish on Fridays, that somehow you were walking more closely with the Lord. But these kinds of doctrines and practices are termed here, "departing from the faith." Verse 4 says, "For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." The Word of God says that all foods that God has created are permissible for you to eat, when you are giving thanks for them. You must eat in moderation; certainly; and you must not fall into the sin of gluttony. You should be wise and reasonable about what you eat, but your abstaining from this food or that food does not make you more spiritual in any sense of the word. Do you give thanks for the food that you eat? You ought to do so, for it is an exercise in godliness. Your food comes to you

because God provides you with it, whether you know it or not. It is ungodliness not to thank Him for it. Eating your food is a holy exercise of godliness if you are thankful for it and have a clear conscience in regard to eating it, because the word of God tells you that it is so; the words of the Lord Jesus declare it to be so. Jesus says in Mark chapter 7, verse 14, "Hear Me, everyone, and understand: there is nothing from outside which can defile a man; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man." He said to His disciples later, privately, "Are you without understanding also?" "Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not enter his heart but his stomach and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?" In the NAS it says, "And thus He declared all foods clean."

You see, this verse is about your spiritual exercise, and it is set in the context of "profane and old wives' tales". It is people making up their own doctrines of what is right and wrong and good and bad; calling these false practices godly, or calling them true religion, in relation to things eaten, and in relation to sexual things; this is false; and it can lead many astray. God has declared what is right in the Word of God, but those who are ungodly, trying to be religious, make up something different by the strength of their own observations. And then by the persuasiveness of their own personality and words; they convince others that something is true when it is not. They convince others to believe superstitions and lies about how God is to be worshiped and served. This kind of approach; declaring your opinions about God and what He is like, and what He expects, and how a person is saved; if it doesn't square with the Word of God is utterly false. True religion and godliness is not a matter of your going to your friend, or someone who is popular, to hear the latest gossip or advice. True religion is not a church making up its own traditions and then nullifying the Word of God with them. If you are a true disciple of Jesus Christ, you will let the Word of God judge all things in regard to what you participate in, or what you do with you body, or what you pursue in the thoughts of your soul. Reject the profane and old wives' fables. You can see this also in 1 Timothy 1, verse 3, if you will turn there. "As I urged you when I went in Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith." "The purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, desire to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm." "But we know the law is good if one uses it lawfully."

I hope that you understand, as I say these words to you, that the thing that you must reject, if you are to exercise yourself toward godliness, is your giving heed to fables (that is; things which are not true to the reality of what God expects you to do in righteous thinking, in relation to Him, and righteous living in terms of what He expects you to do). "Blessed is the person who hears the word of God," Jesus

says, "and does it." In order for you to become a godly person, you simply cannot spend most of your spare time reading, and watching, and paying attention to things which are made up by people who are trying to superimpose a make-believe reality upon the true reality which God has created. God expects you to interact with Him in relation to His book, the Bible; over everything that you are participating in, in your experience. If you respond to Him in faith, saying, Lord Jesus teach me your holy way, and give me the strength to do what you have commanded me to do; then you are truly His disciple. This really is very important; that you begin to understand this if you have not already. We are living in a media-driven age. And some of you may be spending large amounts of time paying attention to vain things, either on the computer or through watching television, or even reading novels and books that have no godly emphasis or teaching to them. And you rarely pick up your Bible and read it so that you understand that it is God speaking to you in it. How do you expect to become godly if this is so? It shall not be. And so, you should know and receive this truth at this very hour; you are dishonoring God if you are living in this way. You are wasting away the precious time that God has given to you, which you do not have to waste. And you will greatly regret it later, if you don't wake up to see it now. Do you not understand that in order to exercise yourself toward godliness that you are going to have to deliberately reject and forsake all the false realities that are continually presented to you day by day on the computer, the television, and books; those realities that either leave God out, or warp and twist His Word so that you will believe a lie?

I am talking now about all the shows on television and on the computer that have a story to tell, but in doing so they present a false reality. Let me give you some examples. There are many shows on TV these day that put forth the message that doing murder and violence are good and justifiable in order for things to work out for you in the end, in a human sense; as though this life is all that there is. Both of those ideas are false. This life is not all that there is, and doing murder and violence, and living by force are not good and justifiable except in self defense. Another example is the many sexually immoral and compromising images that are paraded across the screen of your TV and your computer that you might be watching, and God is grieved, but you are unaware. He knows that when you watch them for any length of time that you will be defiled. And He knows that they take away all of your heart to see and receive spiritual truth. Then there is all the covetousness, the envy, the jealousy, the evil speaking against other people as though it is somehow a good and right thing to continually argue and fight with people around us; especially our parents. Another example is the many false things that are that are portrayed in the media of Television and computers about God Himself; the wrong views of God and His righteousness, the wrong views of Christ and His glory; the wrong views of how money and riches and material possessions supposedly bring happiness, when really they do not. I want to plead with you now that you would pray to God so that He would give you grace so that

you would not be pursuing these things as somehow good or permissible to you. They are not; and you should know that your bad habits of abiding in those things, and your example in doing so; will teach others that it is alright, and so God will not be honored, but dishonored by many.

But this need not be so, if you know Christ. You must learn to reject profane and old wives' tales. If you do use your computer, use it for God and to cultivate within your mind the truth. It is the truth of the Word of God that will set you free. If the television is not giving you a vision for what God is wanting you to cultivate in your mind and heart, then stop watching it. You are going to have to decide, on many occasions, on many nights whether it will be some vain TV show or whether God's word will in some way be brought into your life. In terms of spiritual blessings, God does keep score; He is keeping track of what you do with the truth that you have been given. You will be moving toward godliness when you don't engage in idle talk, when you don't believe, watch, and pursue the fables that men make which they place in books, in films, and try to infiltrate your life with, so that you will eventually forget all about God, and all about the truth. What a terrible awakening it will be for some on the Day of Judgment when they find that they have totally misspent the time that God gave them to come to know Him and to serve Him in the way that He desired. They will be cast into hell because they were lazy and unprofitable servants. They may have professed to know Him, but by their practices; their deeds which follow them; they deny Him. Take care that it is not you. Reject profane and old wives tales; which is what is mostly paraded around over the television, the air waves, and the computers these days, and exercise yourself toward godliness. You will never regret it.

Now 2ndly – In order to exercise yourself toward Godliness you will need to believe the truth that Godliness is profitable for all things in this life.

Verse 8 says, "For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is..." Our salvation rests upon the truth of the gospel promises. It is that if we believe in Christ that we shall be saved. But the same promise that saves us in relation to our faith in the Lord Jesus, also holds promise in relation to our being blessed even in the living of our Christian life, if we will exercise ourselves unto godliness. I want to show you a few verses related to this wonderful truth. Look over with me at 1 Timothy 2, verse 1. "Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence." This is how you exercise yourself unto godliness; it is when you learn to pray for all men, all kinds of men; especially those like kings who are in political power and authority. What is the reason for that? Well, they are to be prayed for, that they might be saved. It says so in verses 3 and 4; "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." But it is even more than that. We exercise ourselves to pray so that we

might lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence (or dignity). It is because the work and labors and advancement of the kingdom of God and Christ thrive and flourish in a God-glorifying sense, better, when Christians are not being hounded and persecuted. There is, then, time for reading and Bible study, and the teaching of the converts is not disrupted as it is in days of persecution. This is not to say that the kingdom of God does not go forward in times of persecution. God is certainly able to do that. But it is better for the Church's on-going work of teaching and worship when she is not being continually hounded and oppressed by men; when her members are able to lead a quiet and a peaceful life. Let me ask you if you pray for that? Ask yourself now, if prayer is something that you exercise yourself to do? If not, it is something that you should begin to do so that you might be strong as a Christian, so that others might be saved, and so that you might not live a life of turmoil and agitation, but a quiet and peaceable life, and thus glorify God by the way that you live.

Then if you will turn with me to 1 Peter Chapter 1, verse 1, you will find Peter giving an exhortation to add something to your faith by way of exercise. Now the Lord Jesus when He was here upon the earth did not tell His disciples and His apostles to "get down and give me 50". He did not have them form lines and tell them to do push-ups, and squat-thrusts, and deep-knee bends and back bends, and things like that. He did not tell them to get themselves a Ghee and then teach them physical exercises in relation to their godliness. But He did tell Peter how it was that a man or a woman could exercise themselves unto godliness. "Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world through lust." Let me stop for a moment and say that once again we see that our faith and salvation rest upon the promises of God. Those promises of grace are given to those who believe in Jesus Christ. Those who believe come to know this divine power which is the Holy Spirit conveying that ability to those who believe to begin to live godly in Christ Jesus. Those who believe are called "partakers of the divine nature," and those who "have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Since we who believe have received these blessings of the New Birth and the gift of the Holy Spirit, and have experienced a death to sin in our hearts when we were converted, then Peter says that we have a responsibility to exercise ourselves unto godliness. Listen to verse 5 – "But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, (there's the exercise) add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love." All these things we are to add to our faith, just as a man would

engage himself in his bodily exercise in training for the competition in the Olympic games, being diligent in it every day. I know that there are many here in this congregation today who are engaging in bodily exercise every day so that they might be physically fit, and healthy. Why not also exercise yourself unto godliness every day in the same way? Persevere in reading your Bible and praying. Persevere in cultivating the excellent qualities of the fruit of the Spirit in your life; Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Gentleness, Goodness, Kindness, Faithfulness, and Self-control. Determine in your heart that you do not have to say that unkind thing, or point out all the sins and weaknesses of a person whom you call brother to someone else. Add brotherly kindness and deliberately study to do other people good, as a regular exercise in your life. You will be amazed, and others will be amazed at how strong and how spiritually healthy you will have become by these exercises if you choose by the grace of God to do them.

Then 3rdly, and finally, if you would exercise yourself toward godliness, you must believe that godliness has the promise also for the life to come.

Verse 8 says, "For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." Now I want you to notice the wording here; the promise of the life to come. There is a life, the life that now is; and there is the life to come. And godliness it says is profitable for all things; for both. I want you to think about this other verse as well, in relation to this one that we are studying. It is found in 1 Timothy 6: 6. "Now godliness with contentment is great gain." "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." Let me ask you in closing whether you as a Christian are exercising yourself toward godliness? If you are you will have great contentment in all that you do in this life, and you will have much to look forward to in the next. Listen to how the Apostle Paul spoke to King Agrippa and the governor Festus when he was trying to defend himself for his preaching of the gospel. Acts 24: 10 – "Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered: 'Inasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge of this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself, because you may ascertain that it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship.'" "And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city." "Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me." "But this I confess to you, that according to the way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets." "I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust." "This being so, I myself always strive (you see he was exercising even then) to have a conscience without offense toward God and men." He had exercised himself towards godliness all through his Christian life, and he was exercising himself toward godliness when he was witnessing before governors and kings. He was going to so live that he would have a clear conscience

in doing whatever he was doing at the very time that he was unsure of the outcome in relation to what men would do to him and with him. This is how I hope that you and I will live as well. Because all of our exercise will be remembered and rewarded in the life to come.