

Godly Living in an Ungodly Age

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[0:00] Good evening and thank you for moving forward.

! Schofield, a name certainly that Jason will be familiar with, having your doctorate from Dallas Theological and some of your others maybe, the Schofield Study Bible for instance.

He was invited to a revival from a young preacher in his first ministry in the hills of North Carolina, small little log cabin church. And that was the days you didn't get on an airplane.

He took the train. And he took the train for three days, got there, the young preacher had gone throughout the hills and valleys of his area and told him the great Dr. Schofield's coming.

And he showed up the first night, there were 25 people there. And this young preacher was just in tears. I mean, he had spoken to hundreds of people and he was Dr. C.I. Schofield.

[1:21] And he, I think the young man was ready to leave the ministry. He was so frustrated. Dr. Schofield got up there and he said, you know, he said when Jesus was on earth, he had 12 and one of them was a devil.

It's presumptuous of me that I would have more than Jesus. So I appreciate you making the effort to be here tonight. And we'll see what the Lord might have in store for us.

The title of my message this evening is Godly Living in an Ungodly World. The subtitle is Do As I Say But Don't Ever Do As I Do.

I'm going to be talking about godliness and holiness. And it's troublesome for me personally. I've been praying even this afternoon.

You know, Lord, I'm least qualified to bring this message. I'm not an Apostle Paul or an Apostle Peter. I'm not a Mike Dursham. But we'll see where the Lord takes us.

[2:38] For several months now, I've been thinking about these terms, godliness and holiness. And specifically, my responsibilities as a follower of Christ to pursue both.

You know, I'm 66 years old. Like everyone else in this room, I don't know how much time I have left in this life before the Lord calls me home.

I don't know how much any of us have left before the Lord comes back and calls us home. I thought it might happen last week given the events in Israel and the Ukraine and everywhere else.

It just seems like systems are falling apart and into anarchy. And maybe it is the beginning of birth pangs. I don't know. But my desire is, forgetting what is behind me, I want to press on toward the upward call of Christ so that when I depart this world, someone might say, well, he was a godly man and they wouldn't be lying.

There may be some say that. That wouldn't be truthful. But I'd like it to be the truth. Quite honestly, I used to think that the very idea of being godly was an impossibility, so why try?

[4:15] You could never achieve it. You know, why try? It was enough for me. I'll just focus on Jesus being godly. He could be godly for me, and I won't worry about any of the rest.

But as I've studied scripture, I've come to realize that such is not the case. It's not the case. It is true that every believer, every true believer, has received what the theologians call the imputed righteousness of Christ without his perfection living in us.

Without his perfection living in us, we cannot see God. When we stand before a perfectly holy God, the Father will look at us and he will see Christ.

He will see us cloaked in the righteousness of Christ. But at the same time, the Lord commands us to be holy or godly, and I use those terms for our purposes tonight interchangeably, and to seek such with our whole being.

As I was traveling around Scotland last month, I was thinking of this message. And actually, what I'm trying to eventually do is to build this into a three-hour Friday and all-day Saturday message.

[5:53] In fact, I'm giving an abbreviated version of this in September. Our youngest son, Rob, his church in Branson. But tonight, I'm just going to do a broad brush and just hit some basic truths with minimal comment so you can consider the subject.

But before we go further, I think it's important to define the word that we'll be using here quite a bit this evening, and that's this word godliness.

Let's come up with a definition. That is the kind of life that God is calling us to, so how should we define it?

And the best definition I've stolen from other men is this. Godliness is devotion to God that results in a life that is pleasing to Him.

It is devotion to God, and I would suggest the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that results in a life that is pleasing to Him.

[7:12] Is God pleased with you tonight? As you sit there, I hope He is. Is God well pleased with our lives? And you know, there are so many verses that you could study or comment on, but I found one.

I just want to read it. Actually, I'm throwing this in. It's not even in my notes. But over in 1 Timothy chapter 4, which we just finished a study of 1 Timothy on Monday night, Apostle Paul is instructing Timothy around verse 7, having nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths.

Rather, train yourself for godliness. Train yourself for godliness, for while bodily training is of some value. And this really just gripped me today.

Godliness is of value in every way, and listen to this, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

So God is commanding us there to live a certain life that will not only see rewards in this life, but in the life to come.

[8:29] We will take our godliness to glory. It's an amazing passage of Scripture. Godliness, then, is devotion to God that results in a life that is pleasing to Him.

Now, devotion is an important concept. Very important. And I can't understate this. Devotion to the true God always results in godly character.

If you're truly devoted, you will exhibit godly character. And the operative word there is always.

When you are truly devoted to the true God, it always results in godly living.

And it is an unfortunate sign of the times in which we live that I have to add that verbiage, the true God. Because there's so many false gods out there and false systems of belief.

Timothy, in fact, the book of Timothy that Paul wrote, he was building a hedge of protection around Timothy against false teachers, false preachers.

[9:40] And we have more today on earth and in America than we've ever had in the history of the world. Pretty amazing. Now, keep in mind this central truth.

It is both the privilege and duty of every Christian to pursue godliness.

Godliness. And it's a pursuit. It will not come by osmosis. I tried that for 66 years.

It didn't work. Probably more appropriately, I tried it for 36 years. I got saved at 30. It is our privilege, but it is also our obligation to pursue godliness.

We are commanded to pursue godliness. We're commanded to train ourselves to be godly, to study diligently, and to practice godliness.

[10:44] Practice godliness. When you're making a decision, think in terms of godliness. The kids have it right. What would Jesus do? Well, he would do right.

He would do godly. He would do holy. You don't need any special talent to be godly. It means I can pursue it.

If you are one with Christ, you have been supplied with the means of godliness. In fact, 2 Peter 1.3 says that every one of us, and that's followers of Christ, have everything we need for life and godliness.

Amazing. The simplest Christian or the deepest thinking theologian must use the same means in the practice of godliness.

And I mentioned earlier just how important devotion is. That is where godliness comes from. That is where godliness comes from. And I want to expand on that.

[11:56] And the first thing I want to say concerning devotion is this. Devotion is not an activity. If you have this concept that devotion is what I'm going to do, that's an activity.

Devotion is an attitude. We should be waking up with devotion. It's a way of thinking. Not an activity.

Not something that we have to strain at to try and achieve. It is an attitude. This is a great truth. It is not to be taken lightly. I think most people today tend to think of devotion as an activity.

I did or did not do my devotions today or this week. But devotions are not an activity. They are an attitude. And there are three essential elements to being a devoted follower of Christ Jesus that results in godliness.

This is the attitude that we should adopt. Okay? Three essential elements. And the first one I will mention to you is this. The fear of God.

[13:19] Now there is an archaic term. Isn't it? I mean, you know, how many bookstores have in the front like, you know, like Mardell's and the Baptist bookstore?

They don't even call that anymore. What do they call that, hon? What is it? Lifeway. Lifeway, yeah. I kept wanting to say living truth, but that goes way back in Mardell. Lifeway. And they put all those bestsellers up front.

Rarely do you say you better be afraid of God. You know? The fear of God. The fear of God is this first step, so to speak, in godliness.

The life devoted to God, if you're going to live that life, to live that life, you must fear God. The great Scottish theologian, and Diane and I just returned from Scotland, as you know, the greatest, one of the great Scottish theologians, and there were a lot of them, John Murray, said, the fear of God is the very soul of godliness.

But, in all honesty, let's face it, the concept of the fear of God has been lost in most pulpits and in most denominations.

[14:38] It's not preached, it's not taught, and it's not lived. We used to speak of a person being like a God-fearing man. You ever hear that term back years ago?

He was a God-fearing man. But that concept has really become quite antiquated. Quite antiquated. The concept of the fear of God is used in two distinct ways in the Bible.

The first of these, we could define as anxious, anxious dread. There's a lot of examples of that, but I think the greatest is in the book of Revelation where people will assemble one day and there'll be the greatest prayer service in the history of the world.

Millions and perhaps billions of people are going to pray to the rocks and the mountains to fall on them and hide them from the face of the wrath of the Lamb of God.

Wow. That's fear. That's dread. If there ever was dread. Now, the fear of anxious dread is produced in men who are not true followers of Christ.

[16:00] They may or may not have gone through some religious motion, but they neither know Christ nor are they known by Him savingly. This is what Jesus meant in Matthew chapter 7 when the very religious people, very religious people stood before Him and it's amazing because here's what the Lord had to say.

Don't turn there, but Matthew 7 verse 21. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

On that day many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name and cast out demons in Your name and do many wonderful works in Your name and then I will declare to them I never knew you.

Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness. That's a pretty impressive list of accomplishments, isn't it? They prophesied, they cast out demons, they did all these wonderful things.

It's interesting and it's almost in the shadows, though not quite. If you really listen with your ears what those people are saying to the Lord, look at what I've done. I've done this and I've done that.

[17:21] Instead of, Lord, I cast myself upon Your mercy. Have mercy on me, a sinner. You know, the tax collector couldn't even look toward heaven. Have mercy, Lord, on me, a sinner. But that was, they were impressed with themselves on what they'd accomplished.

Jesus looks at them and declares those dread words, I never knew you. I never knew you. People who will one day hear those would have every reason to fear God with anxious dread.

Paul predicts that this group, he indicts this group, rather, with these words, there is no fear of God before their eyes. Over in Romans chapter 3, verse 18.

They have no fear of God before their eyes. Now, that's the unbeliever. Unbelievers have every reason to fear God with dread.

But for the believer who desires to live godly in Christ Jesus, he or she has no reason to fear with that type of dread.

[18:32] That's not reserved for the true believer. You've been delivered from that. His or hers is a fear born of veneration, reverence, and awe.

And we won't read it, but probably the greatest example of that may be Isaiah when he saw the Lord high and lifted up. He said, woe is me, I'm undone.

I'm undone. The seraphim that were flying around the throne and are flying around it right now hid their eyes from the face of the Lamb and declared the holiness of the triune God.

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. That is veneration, reverence, and awe. We in this life are working out our salvation, the scriptures say, with fear and trembling.

So our fear is one of veneration, of honor, respect, reverence, and awe. When we come into the presence of God, our hearts overflow with adoration and love.

[19:41] We do not and indeed need not focus on the wrath of God but upon his majesty, his holiness, and his glory. I was listening to Paul Worsher not too long ago and he said, you know, when people think of the length of eternity, you know, we're going to be with the Lord for eternity.

What are we going to be doing? And he suggested we're going to be picking nuggets of gold off the cross and come into an ever deepening understanding of what Jesus did at the cross and we will never arrive, even in eternity.

There will be even more things to know and to study and to reflect upon. And again, when Isaiah saw the Lord of glory high and lifted up, he cried out, woe is me.

Peter experienced this and he said, Lord, depart from me for I am a sinful man. You shouldn't be in my presence. John, the beloved disciple, I think the youngest, I think Jesus kind of took care of him. I think he was a teenager when he joined the band of disciples. I think the Lord made sure he had the warm spot next to the fire, the extra blanket and a little extra food on his plate.

[21:03] I really believe that Jesus did that for John. And John, I used to get a little upset at John because he'd refer to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved. Then I realized the Holy Spirit wrote those words.

I better stop being upset about that. That's the Holy Spirit's description. John sees on Patmos the risen and glorified Christ and what does he do?

Falls at his feet as if dead. There are believers responses to our fearsome God.

And I'm always offended when I hear somebody say, well, we're going to go and visit the man upstairs or he's my buddy or he's just as holy today and we come into his presence because of his atoning sacrifice as he was to the Jews who would never go into his presence but they sent a high priest once a year to go into his presence and they tied a rope on him in case he made a mistake and got struck dead, they could reel him out like a fish because no one would go in after him. They too would be killed. Same God, same level of holiness. Hasn't compromised that holiness. So the first attitude of the godly person living in godliness is the proper fear of God.

[22:24] The second is the love of God. The love of God. Only the god-fearing believer can truly appreciate the love that God has for us.

And we can't plumb its depth but we can have an appreciation for it. There is an unbridgeable gulf that exists between a holy god and unholy men.

No work that we can do can ever move us one inch toward bridging that gulf. And if you will examine religion, human religion, every one of those are efforts to bridge the gulf.

And they all fail. They all fail. But Christ in his atoning work has bridged the gulf.

I've seen that displayed. You've got this gulf and you've got the cross across the gulf. You know. He bridged the gulf. God loves us in so many ways. They cannot possibly be numbered.

[23:30] But his supreme act of love was sending his son to die for our sins. All other aspects of his love are secondary to this.

In fact, his love for us is made possible through the atonement. That's where love met with us. In the atonement, God's righteous wrath was satisfied.

His love then flowed freely to his children. Because of this, we can now say with the apostle John, God is love. God is love.

And as a true son of God, never forget that one time, at one point, you and I were the objects of God's holy and just wrath.

There was enmity between us and God. the cross is a peace treaty. Picture the cross as a peace treaty.

[24 : 28] The treaty was signed by God and extended to those who would believe. And let me add, and it was signed in blood, the perfect blood of Christ.

And because of that, God loves us unreservedly. When you're saved, you're justified. justified is a legal term that means just, justification.

People like to say, it's just as if I've never sinned. God treats us just as if we'd never sinned. It's deeper than that. God treats you just as if you're Jesus. Boy, that'll humble you if you think that through tonight after you go to bed and you're looking at that dark ceiling.

God the Father, because of what Jesus did, is now free to treat you as if you're his precious son, his very own son, very own daughter. For such you are.

And when we speak of the love of God, remember it is not so much our love for him, although that is vitally important, but we focus on God's love for us, which is absolutely astounding.

[25 : 40] The God of the universe loves us. It's astounding. And I want to make this major point. Our awareness of God's love must be constantly growing.

It's not static. It's not stagnant. Another area where we grow in our devotion to God and thus increase our godliness is our desire for God.

We are like the deer that pants for water. The more we know God, the more we thirst to know him even better. God is spirit and therefore to know him is to know his great attributes.

God is a person and therefore he can be known. How do you get to know someone? Well, you get to know them by spending time with them.

That's how you get to know somebody. We spend time with God in studying his word, in praying, in coming under the preaching of the word, in focusing on his attributes.

[26 : 42] We can't at one and the same time be satisfied being in the presence with God and yet yearning for more. We're satisfied but we yearn.

Paul and David probably had more experience with God than perhaps any other men on the face of this earth, but during their lives they constantly yearn to experience more fellowship with him.

They wanted to be with him. There's a great Old Testament example of this in Enoch. Let me read this from the pages of the Old Testament over in Genesis chapter 5.

Jared lived 162 years and became the father of Enoch. Then Jared lived 800 years after he became the father of Enoch and he had other sons and daughters.

That's a long time. So all the days of Jared were 962 years and he died. There's a flow there if you read that whole section.

[27 : 53] It's and he died and he died and he died. Where'd that come from? Genesis chapter 3. The fall in the garden ushered in death to the human race. But Jared had Enoch.

I'm not saying his wife didn't help out. You never hear of Mrs. Jared or Mrs. Enoch. But Jared had Enoch as a son. And I love this.

Enoch lived 65 years and became the father of Methuselah. Now anyone ever taught Sunday school or went to Sunday school you know him right?

Oldest guy that ever lived. But I love this. The scripture says he became the father of Methuselah and then it has a four letter word.

Then. After Methuselah's birth Enoch looked down at that little baby and it says then Enoch walked with God 300 years after he became the father of Methuselah and he had other sons and daughters.

[29 : 14] There was something about that baby that struck Enoch. And after the birth of that baby he looked down and he began to walk with God.

When our youngest son was born Rob I was not a believer. He had medical problems. He was only hours old. Had difficulty breathing on his own.

I was petrified. I got home at 530 that morning. You know babies are never born at 230 in the afternoon. They were 230 in the morning and I got home at 530 in the morning and I hit my knees. I wasn't saved but I prayed the most sincere prayer I've ever prayed. And I remember what I told the Lord. The nurses can't stand next to him but you can.

Please breathe for him if he can't breathe on his own. And that prayer was answered. He's 36 years old and in December he will become a father for the first time. And it's a little girl.

[30 : 21] Pictures will be available I'm sure at the appropriate time. Enoch looked down at that baby and then he began to walk with God.

And then it says he had other sons and daughters. So all the days of Enoch were 365 years. Enoch walked with God and he was not for God took him.

Greatest explanation I ever heard for that was a little five-year-old black boy. And the teacher said can you explain that? And he said sure. He said Jesus and Enoch would go out and play.

And then Enoch would go home and Jesus would go home and one day they're out playing and Jesus said it's getting dark and you're a lot closer to my home than yours. Why don't you just come home with me? And they said that'll be good. I'll just go home with you.

You can't get better theology than that. It doesn't get any better than that. But there's another verse on Enoch and it's in Hebrews chapter 11.

[31 : 24] By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death and he was not found because God took him up for he obtained the witness that before being taken up he was pleasing to God.

How was he pleasing? Well he had the imputed righteousness of Christ and he worked at godliness. His attitude was to be godly.

We learned two things about Enoch very instructive as we live out our lives in the 21st century. We learned that he walked with God. That's a message to you from God not from me.

He walked with God and he was pleasing to God. Twofold. Walked and pleased. His walk with God speaks of his relationship with God.

That is another way of saying that Enoch was devoted to God and exercised devotion to him, to the Lord. It is the same devotion we are to have with God and it begins when we walk with God.

[32 : 42] That's where it begins when we walk with God. Walking with God is devotion in action. John says in his epistle we are to walk as Christ walked.

We're to walk as Jesus walked. But there's more. Enoch was pleasing to God. Enoch was devoted to God. He exercised godliness and therefore was pleasing to God.

If we walk with God and exercise an Enoch type of devotion, we too shall be pleasing to God. I'm going to close this.

I apologize if we close early. If you desire to be godly in Christ Jesus and want to live a life of devotion to him, there is a price that must be paid.

There is a price that must be paid. There is no shortcut to godliness. You can't go down and buy what are those things kids buy?

[33 : 51] The little books that they're those notes, you know, they get those notes. I never depended on those. I just hope the girl next to me was smart.

There's no shortcut to godliness. It is the day in and day out exercise of faithfulness directed to God as we walk in the Spirit.

As we walk in the Spirit, it is a commitment to his word as we study the great truths of Scripture.

God committed to his word leads to our last point.

When it comes to godliness, there is no neutral ground. There's no neutral ground. What do I mean by that?

At any given moment in your life, you are either walking with God or you are not.

[35 : 04] At any given moment, you're either pleasing God or you are not. At any given moment, you're living a godly life or you are not.

There is no third choice. We can't say, this section is for the godly folks and this one is for the ungodly and over here, we're neutral on it.

We'll figure it out. There's no third choice. We are either godly or we leak all over.

like an Olympic athlete, we must practice godliness, devotion, fear, love, and all the other things that we covered this evening.

My wife will laugh as I watch the golf tournament today. I already knew who had won it, but I was anxious and I was nervous. Turn off television, open up God's word, spend time with the Holy Spirit in the study of the Bible, prayer, meditation, Bible memorization, which is the most difficult thing in the world for me.

[36 : 28] When I was in Scotland, I decided I'm going to start memorizing verses of scripture, and I got one memorized. I'm terrible at it. Exercise godliness. until you hear one day some very beautiful words, well done, good and faithful slave.

That's the Greek, *doulos*. Well done, good and faithful slave, enter into the joy of your master. those are the words we're striving to hear. Thank you.