

## Godliness

Certain virtues in Scripture are so glorious and compelling once they are understood, this very act of comprehension is enough to motivate us toward their pursuit. I believe that is true with godliness (the Greek word *eusebia*). Consider what Paul says about it in Titus 2:11-12: “The Grace of God has appeared...training us to renounce ungodliness...and to live...godly lives....”

The root *seb-* meant originally to step back from someone or something, especially out of fear or shame. Though the word group is used only rarely in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, it usually renders the Hebrew *yare*, “to fear”. The negative adverb “ungodly,” *asebes*, is often paired with “unrighteous” and focuses upon sinful actions and attitudes, which arise from lack of fear of God.

Godliness involves holiness (2 Peter 3:11) and is marked by: contentment (1 Tim. 6:6); love for God, love for others, humility, obedience to God, thankfulness, and self-control (2 Timothy 3:1-5). Godliness cannot be produced by self, but is the outcome of the work of the gospel of Jesus Christ in us (1 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:3), and is only lived out because saints are united to Him (2 Timothy 3:12). Though godliness is an outcome of the gospel in us, nevertheless, to live it out, we must pursue it (1 Tim. 6:11), discipline our self toward it (1 Timothy 4:7), make every effort to add it to our life (2 Peter 1:6-7), told that our teaching content and approach must measure up to godliness (1 Tim. 6:3; Titus 1:1), we are told to pray for it (1 Tim. 2:2), and promised that there is great gain in godliness with contentment (1 Tim. 6:6).

Given this groundwork, godliness can be defined as “a loving but reverent awe of God” (J. Ligon Duncan III). Along this line, Jerry Bridges (*The Practice Of Godliness*) offers a very helpful more specific definition: “The New Testament word for godliness...conveys the idea of a personal attitude toward God that results in actions that are pleasing to [Him]. This personal attitude... is...devotion to God...in action.... [This] devotion is not an activity; it is an attitude...composed of three essential elements: The fear of God; the love of God; the desire for God.”

The Puritan pastor William Law furthers our understanding of this reverential devotion when he writes: “Devotion signifies a life given...to God...[a] man who lives no longer to his own will...but to the sole will of God, who considers God in everything, who serves God in everything....”

If you know Jesus Christ as your Savior, nothing else need be said. God has given us a mouth-watering delicacy. To have looked at it briefly as we just have is like walking by a bakery where fresh bread has just been pulled out of the oven. We don't need someone to explain why we should want to eat it. We simply do. May God give us that kind of reaction to the aroma wafting from Scripture's teaching on godliness.