

Destiny Newsletter



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THE IMPERATIVE OF GODLINESS

From the Writings
of
Dave Breese

Before that unfortunate afternoon in the Garden of Eden, life was wonderful for the two people who made up the entire population of the earth. Adam and Eve enjoyed every good thing in abundance. Being made in the image of God, they were intelligent, strong, and thoroughly capable of subduing the earth as God had commanded them.

Had Adam and Eve retained their original state, they never would have died. But Eve and then Adam yielded to the serpent's temptation, and death came into the world. Before that moment, they were in a beautiful, pristine state. They existed on a level far above the present condition of the human race. It is difficult to imagine what man was like then by viewing him as he is now. It would require something like trying to reconstruct the original version of an aircraft from its wreckage. If we knew nothing of flying, we would hardly suspect that it had once soared above the earth. The material would be the same, the capability of flight, however, would be lost.

The Fall of man had a similar devastating effect. We have today only shattered images of the beings we were before the Fall. And as it is with man, so it is with society. Today's world is filled with violence, turmoil, and degeneration—evidence of man's fallen condition. For a glimpse into the evil nature of mankind, we need only read the daily newspaper. As in the days of Noah, our world is full of people whose every imagination of the heart is only evil continually.

But is the darkness unbroken? Are there no circles of light in the otherwise black landscape? Happily, the answer to these questions is encouraging. In this world of evil, there are still glimmers, gleams, and sometimes beacons of marvelous light. Despite the darkness they shine, furnishing illumination and direction to many.

What are these lights in the world? They are Christians—Christians who have started with faith and added virtue, knowledge, and self-control. They are those who patiently labor as imitators of the King, who rules the kingdom of light. They are those who now add to their spiritual credentials the imperative of godliness.

What is godliness? It is "*perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*" It is the call to be like God. It is to endeavor to resemble Him in speech, demeanor, appearance, conduct—all things. The word in Scripture is *eusebeia*, which means "to be devout." It is a call to a life characterized by a godward attitude, a life that seeks to please Him.

There are two kinds of people in the world—the godly and the ungodly. Each of us must aspire to the righteous, godly side of the ledger. Everyone who aspires to godliness must ask, "What must I do to be godly?" Notice the teaching of Scripture.

The godly man does not consort or counsel with sinners. A weak Christian will deface his testimony and ruin his reputation and spiritual effectiveness by imitating the wrong crowd and sitting in the seat of the scornful. By listening to the counsel of the ungodly he becomes a cynic rather than a pursuer of God's will. The godly person brings forth fruit, and his activities prosper. The works of the ungodly will not stand on Judgment Day, and they will perish. Everything the sinner gains he will lose—his possessions, reputation, and then life itself will be gone.

The call to godliness is the call to the only kind of success that matters.

There is something worse than failure in this world. What is that? It is to succeed at something that doesn't matter. That characterizes the work of every person whose life is not committed to the will of Jesus Christ.

We can rejoice that in the pursuit of godliness, as with all things, we will have help from the Lord. God intends that every Christian become more like Jesus Christ. We are predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29). Having believed the Gospel, the Christian comes under the fashioning of the Lord Himself. God will use every circumstance, every association, every experience of life to bring His children to the point that they reflect His holiness. To resist this working of God is to bring ourselves to defeat. To cooperate with this working of God is the highest form of spiritual wisdom. Seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness is the wisest course we can take.

The writer of Hebrews tells us that we are involved in a great race that reaches through time into eternity. To win such a race, we will need strength and motivation. Where will we get these qualities? The scriptural answer is "*looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God*" (Hebrews 12:2).

The writer then says, "*For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds. You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin*" (Hebrews 12:3-4). To those who would tire in battle come the stinging words, "*You have not yet resisted unto blood.*" We have no right to complain, and it is too soon to quit anywhere short of death in the battle for righteousness.

An even stronger call to conform ourselves to Christ is given in

the command *"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 2:5). The mind of Christ is the gift given to every Christian and the call of conformity to that mind is extended to each of us. We should think each day about the program God has for us.

In every circumstance of life, one should ask, "What is God's plan in this?" "What is the spiritual principle behind this event?" "What new spiritual quality does God intend to develop in me through this circumstance?" No event in life is without spiritual value to the person pursuing godliness.

A generation ago Charles Sheldon wrote a book entitled *In His Steps*. In this classic Christian work, Sheldon has each of his characters, when faced with a dilemma, ask, "What would Jesus do?" In the course of the book they face various questions of disharmony, dishonesty, and even disgrace. Their courses of action in light of their commitment to do what Jesus would do provides a fascinating outcome.

To do the will of God by the light that we have is the path to godliness. That lesson could be applied to each of our lives. Scripture teaches that Jesus Christ left us an example so that we could follow in His steps (John 13:15; I Peter 2:21). The Scriptures also tell us that we have the example of the prophets, the apostles, the angels, and, of course, the godly, consecrated, heroic believers whose lives are presented in the Word of God. In addition, we have the example of those who throughout the history of the Church have ministered with distinction in their service to God.

Each of us is an example—positive or negative—to someone. How tragic that the life of any believer should become an illustration of spiritual failure. How beautiful when we can offer a godly example.

Knowing something of this dark and unfriendly world, we find a related question coming to mind. "Why doesn't God intervene in history in a more direct and powerful way?" "Why doesn't He give us something more reliable than the fragile lives of believing Christians?" "Why does He appear to leave so much responsibility to us and our own devices?" There are times when we would like to cry out, "God, where are You?" Where is God

when the darkness threatens to smother us? Where is God, who could so easily deliver us?

Some believe that these questions themselves are evidence of insufferable faithlessness. "God is right here," they say. "He is at your beck and call." They tell us to claim the promises and command His response, then we will instantly and abundantly have whatever we need.

This doctrine is, of course, false. It should be rejected by all who have read the Word or even lived a bit of life. Anyone who has lost a child in an accident, seen a beloved wife endure cancer, failed to prevent a son's divorce, or watched a loved one die will reject the false teaching that promises God's intervention in all situations.

If not by His personal intervention, how then does God work in the world? Let us not forget the personal intervention of Jesus Christ into history. Anyone who would argue that God has not done enough should take another look at Christ's death on Calvary. In this one event, the love of God was demonstrated irrefutably and forever. The argument that God does not care is forever proved false. The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is the evidence on which God rests His case. He is the loving Intervenor in human history. In dying for us Christ worked the great external work. He died in space and time, in flesh and blood, for all the world to see and believe. He arose and declared Himself alive *"by many infallible proofs"* and before many witnesses. This is the message He has sent to the world.

How then does He plan to give that message? He does it by calling godly witnesses—not magicians. A magician is one who creates illusions. Spiritual magicians pervert the Gospel with their fanciful illusions. Seldom in Christian history have so many foolishly paid so much for so little. The Lord's program is different. He calls witnesses whose testimony is verified by godliness. These witnesses know the blessing of sins forgiven; they have believed in the Christ of Calvary. We must recognize that God, having spoken through His Son and His written Word, is now silent as to new, verbal revelation. He has called others to speak for Him and has appointed them His ambassadors in this world. How do we know these witnesses to be true? The testimony is their godliness.

They are "like God." They become "living Bibles" for the world to read.

Anyone who believes that godliness is not essential to Christian living should take another look at the increasingly godless society in which we live. One of the strongest descriptions of the world in which we live is given in conjunction with the coming of Jesus Christ in judgment. Jude says, *"Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him"* (v. 14b-15). The word *ungodly* is used four times in that single verse of Scripture. Can anyone doubt that this is the way God sees this world? Can anyone doubt that the godly life, lived in the midst of such ungodliness, will be set apart? Godliness is imperative to service for Christ. As we move toward the end of the age, this imperative may become the single most important credential of those taking the message of Christ to a darkening world.

Finally, who are these witnesses? They are you and I. "You are my witnesses," said our Lord Jesus. This He said to His disciples and to each one of us. What credentials do we have? We are to have godliness! We are to be as much like God—like our Lord Jesus—as we can possibly be. The godliness Peter advocates is established only through steadfastness. The steadfast Christian will stay true to God, establish himself on the path to godliness, and be characterized by love.

There was a time when I sought to discover the qualities essential to godly living and to learn what I must do to achieve them. It soon became clear to me that these qualities are developed slowly and progressively. They do not appear suddenly but are acquired as we attempt to perform the will of God. Neither godliness nor any of the other virtues is achieved in an instant. They do not come about as a result of one traumatic experience. There is no breakthrough that takes us suddenly from a low to a high quality of living.

Yet Peter tells us, *"Add to your faith... godliness"*—and we know that it can be done. This is to be our great credential. Without this credential our words are empty. We must respond to this call. It promises great gain, both in this world and in the world to come.

THE TIDE OF OUR TIMES

HAPPY THANKSGIVING TO YOU AND YOURS!

"In everything...with thanksgiving," says the Word of God and that formula will not fail to bring encouragement and blessing to any heart. Even in a world like this one, we Christians can truly sing...

"Count your many blessings,
name them one by one,
And it will surprise you,
what the Lord hath done."

WORLD'S LARGEST JEWISH COMMUNITY

(Jerusalem)-- For the first time since the first century, there are more Jews in Israel than any other country, and within 30 years the majority of Jews in the world will be living here, according to one of Israel's top demographers. Recently the Central Bureau of Statistics announced that the country's population now stands at 7.03 million, of which 5.64 million people are Jews. This is more than the number of Jews living in the United States, which until now was home to the most Jews.

The Jerusalem Post

"A MICROCHIP THE SIZE OF A LONG GRAIN OF RICE"

encased in a tiny glass capsule and injected into the upper right arm could, in an emergency, save a person's life. The device, called VeriMed [...] contains [...] a code [...] that when read by a hand-held scanner can reveal key computerized medical information to properly registered people. The device is meant to help with treatment and prevent giving needless or possibly harmful medication to patients unable to talk to health care workers about their medical history and condition. [...]

The chip's main opposition is a group called CASPIAN Consumer Advocacy, for Consumers Against Supermarket Privacy Invasion and Numbering. One group leader is Katherine Albrecht, who holds a doctorate in education and is co-author of the book 'Spychips: How Major Corporations and Government Plan to Track Your Every Move With RFID' [passive radio frequency identification device]."

Ann Geracimos, The Washington Times

"SOME HAVE SAID that we should not preach and teach Bible prophecy because it is so divisive! Well, that has existed throughout church history! Disagreements will come about the details of God's future plans. But, the Bible refers to itself as 'prophecy' (II Peter 1:19-21).

The Hebrew prophets continue to project their message into a future that they never experienced. They spoke what God told them to say and most of what they said is still **unfulfilled!** The Book of Revelation is prophecy and needs to be proclaimed. [...] The whole book is about the glory and majesty of our resurrected Lord!"

David Hocking, Prophecy Watch

"IN 'THE FEMALE BRAIN,' Louann Brizendine, a San Francisco-based neuropsychiatrist" states that "there are still those who believe that for women to become equal, unisex must be the norm. The biological reality, however, is that there is no unisex brain [emphasis added]. [...] For many years assumptions about sex differences went scientifically unexamined for fear that women wouldn't be able to claim equality with men. [...]"

[...] Women's unique attributes and strengths deserve to be celebrated."

Carrie Lukas, The Washington Times

"TO SOLIDIFY THE U.S., CANADA, AND MEXICO into one homogeneous zone and remove national boundaries, NAFTA has begun what it calls the Superhighway System, or NAFTA Corridors. [...] This will be the largest engineering project in U. S. history. [...] Corridors will consist of six passenger lanes, three in each direction; four truck lanes, two in each direction; and six rail lanes, three in each direction. [...] The current estimate is that the system will require 146 acres of right-of-way per mile. [...] The total requirement in the U.S. could be over one million acres. [...]"

Signs are now appearing in different parts of the country of NAFTA'S encroachment, and every state will be involved at some point in the near future. [...]

[Although] NAFTA only involves North America, [...]

every area of the globe is in some type of negotiated regional trade agreement [...] . Why? [...]

We are fast approaching the Tribulation when all control and power will be given to the Beast, Revelation 13:16-18."

Bob Glaze, Prophetic Observer

[Editor's Note: Construction of the Trans-Texas Corridor, the first leg of the NAFTA Superhighway, is to begin next year. JE]

WITH A LITTLE THOUGHT, we can compile a remarkable list of the wonderful possessions that, as believers, we have in Jesus Christ. They certainly include . . .

1. Guaranteed salvation (Jn. 10:28).
2. The supply of every need (Phil. 4:19).
3. The privilege of prayer (Jas. 5:16).
4. The Promise that Christ is with us (Matt. 28:20).
5. Strength for every task (Col. 1:11).
6. Membership in the Kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13).
7. The forgiveness of every sin (Col. 1:14).
8. The very mind of Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:5).
9. The ability to influence a nation (Phil. 2:15).
10. Predestinated to glory (Eph. 1:5,6).
11. Knowledge of the will of God (Eph. 1:9).
12. An inheritance in heaven (Eph. 1:11).
13. The privilege of being a divine masterpiece (Eph. 2:10).
14. More good things than we have even imagined (Eph. 3:20).

There is, by the way, another promise which we should not forget. It is the promise of the return of Christ. One of the best of all possessions is the knowledge that Jesus Christ was making a promise to us when He said, *"I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also "* (Jn. 14:3). Yes, one day we will be at home in heaven with Him. This He has promised.

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Q. Is anyone too great a sinner to be saved?

A. The Apostle Paul called himself the chief of sinners (I Tim. 1:15).

You see, no one goes to hell because he is a sinner, but rather, because he has not believed the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Conversely, no one goes to heaven because he has done good things, but rather, because he has believed in the Lord Jesus. Scripture says, *“He that believes on the Son has everlasting life; and he that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him”* (Jn. 3:36).

Q. Some parts of the Bible I don't understand. What shall I do?

A. Understanding grows as we study the Word of God. Therefore, study to show yourself approved unto God, and you will be a workman that does not need to be ashamed because you learned to rightly divide the Word of truth (II Tim. 2:15). In the meantime, obey and do the things that you do understand and further knowledge will come to you.

Q. Are these the days of the kingdom?

A. The kingdom of heaven was offered by Christ during the days of His earthly ministry (Matt. 4:17). Because Israel rejected

Christ the Messiah, He, the King, withdrew the offer. The kingdom of heaven will come on earth, therefore, only when Christ returns again in power and great glory. The Church, the Body of Christ, is distinct from the kingdom of heaven and is the entity through which God represents Himself in the world today. As Christians, we are members of “the kingdom of God’s dear Son.”

Q. Does a Christian live longer than an unsaved worldly person?

A. Generally speaking, he does. The Bible says (this is God speaking about believers), *“With long life will I satisfy him, and show him My salvation”* (Ps. 91:16). Many things affect the length of life, of course, but finally remember that a Christian does not die. Jesus said about the believer, *“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand”* (John 10:28-29). So, we must recognize that death, for the Christian, is a very different thing than for a person of the world. For the world, death is a tragedy. For the Christian, death is the beautiful translation from this world into the infinitely

better world to come. Therefore, above all other considerations, we should be sure that we are saved by faith in Jesus Christ.

Q. Can God use poor little me to be an effective testimony for Christ?

A. The Scripture is very clear on this subject. *“For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in His presence”* (I Cor. 1:26-29).

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DESTINY BULLETIN

A commentary sent to the supporters of the ministry of Christian Destiny:

Dear "Special Friend" of Christian Destiny:

THE IMPERATIVE OF SELF-CONTROL

[illegible]

rendered "temperance," in the King James Version. It does, however, mean more than that. Vine comments that "self-control" is the preferable rendering, as temperance is now limited to but one form of self-control; the various powers of the mind and spirit are susceptible of abuse, and self-control demands the controlling power

His power to us-ward we believe, according to the working of His mighty power, Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead" (Ephesians 1:15-20). When referring to the exceeding greatness of the power of Christ, Paul uses the word *kratos*. By this, it is referring to the power of the Holy Spirit, the guarantee of the Christian's future, and the stability of His promises.

Here we have a list of the attitudes that will characterize sinners at the end of the age. One of them is distinguished by the word *incontinent*. In English, this word means "unable to contain oneself," the "absence of self-control," or "out of control." In the original language, the word

[illegible]

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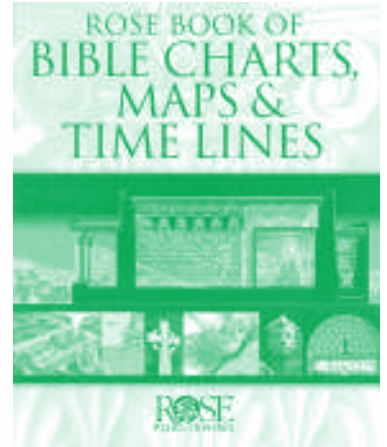
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JERUSALEM IN PROPHECY

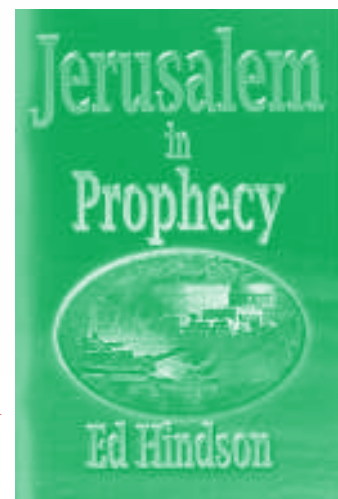
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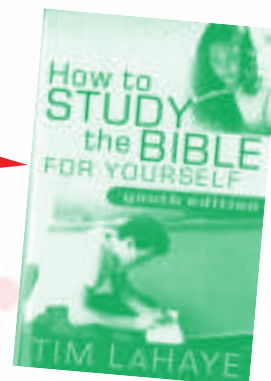


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"The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it" (Psalm 68:11).