

**HWMR: LIVING AND SERVING ACCORDING TO GOD’S ECONOMY CONCERNING THE CHURCH, (Week 5)**

*Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 3:15a, 16a; 4:7b-8; 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:7; 4:22; Titus 1:1*

- 1 Timothy 3:15 But if I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.
- 1 Timothy 3:16 And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh, / Justified in the Spirit, / Seen by angels, / Preached among the nations, / Believed on in the world, / Taken up in glory.
- 1 Timothy 4:7 But the profane and old-womanish myths refuse, and exercise yourself unto godliness.
- 1 Timothy 4:8 For bodily exercise is profitable for a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the present life and of that which is to come.
- 1 Timothy 6:3 If anyone teaches different things and does not consent to healthy words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the teaching which is according to godliness,
- 2 Timothy 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness.
- 2 Timothy 4:22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.
- Titus 1:1 Paul, a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ according to the faith of God’s chosen ones and the full knowledge of the truth, which is according to godliness,

**How to Conduct Ourselves in the House of God—  
Exercising Ourselves unto Godliness**

**Day 1**

*1 Timothy 3:15 - But if I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.*

*Colossians 2:19 - And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.*

- I. “I write that you may know how one ought to **conduct himself in the house of God**”—1 Tim. 3:15a:**
- A. What Paul ministered to Timothy was entirely concerning how to **conduct himself in the church**—1:3-5, 18-19.
  - B. The way to conduct ourselves in the church is by becoming **one who loves the Word of God**—3:15a; cf. John 6:63, 68.
  - C. **Respecting the headship of Christ** and **bearing the truth** are two governing principles that we must follow in order to know how to conduct ourselves in the church life—Col. 2:19; Eph. 4:15.
  - D. In order to properly conduct ourselves in the house of God, the church, we need to **take care of the healthy teaching**—2 Tim. 4:3-4.
  - E. We must **live and act in our spirit** so that in the church God can be manifested as the living God—John 4:23-24; 1 Cor. 6:17; 1 Tim. 3:15-16.

The definition of godliness is **God manifest in the flesh**. Some have recently taught the young people that to always go to the Lord's Day morning meeting is to be religious and that they should feel free to do something else on the Lord's Day morning. Rather than being concerned about whether this teaching is right or wrong, we should simply consider **whether going to do something else on the Lord's Day morning is godliness**. The two Epistles to Timothy were written at a time when the church was in degradation to instruct Timothy how to conduct himself in the house of God. These Epistles do not say that we need to do what is right; rather, they say that we need to exercise ourselves unto godliness. Going to an event other than the church meeting on the Lord's Day morning **is not godliness**. Playing basketball on the Lord's Day morning is not a testimony of godliness to others. This is not a matter of right or wrong; it is a matter of fact. If the young people saw an elder playing basketball during the Lord's Day morning meeting, they would be stumbled and perhaps feel free to begin to live in a loose way. If what we do is an expression of godliness, it will edify the saints and minister life to them. My heart was grieved when I heard that such things were being taught to the young people. This is not an opinion or an insignificant matter; it is a subtle teaching creeping in to lower the standard of God's testimony in the churches and corrupt the young people. Another governing principle that we must follow to properly conduct ourselves in the church is to **exercise ourselves unto godliness**. (*Crucial Principles for the Christian Life and the Church Life*, chapter 8)

### Day 2

*1 Timothy 3:16* - *And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh, / Justified in the Spirit, / Seen by angels, / Preached among the nations, / Believed on in the world, / Taken up in glory.*

*1 Timothy 6:11* - *But you, O man of God, flee these things, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, meekness.*

### Day 3

*1 Timothy 2:2* - *On behalf of kings and all who are in high position, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all godliness and gravity.*

*1 John 3:2* - *Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet been manifested what we will be. We know that if He is manifested, we will be like Him because we will see Him even as He is.*

## II. “Confessedly, great is the mystery of **godliness**”—v. 16a:

- A. The important word *godliness* is used nine times in 1 and 2 Timothy—1 Tim. 2:2;3:16; 4:7-8; 6:3, 5-6, 11; 2 Tim. 3:5.
- B. Godliness is a mystery because it is **real and living yet invisible**—1 Tim. 3:16a;6:11.
- C. The **full knowledge of the truth** is according to godliness—Titus 1:1.
- D. The truth, the reality, of God's eternal economy is according to godliness, which is **God manifested in man**—v. 1; 1 Tim. 3:16a.
- E. Godliness is godlikeness, **being like God, expressing God**—Col. 1:15; 3:10.
- F. Godliness is not merely an outward matter; the word *manifested* in 1 Timothy 3:16 indicates that godliness is an **inward life with an outward expression**.
- G. As believers in Christ, we should pursue godliness; to pursue godliness is to live a daily life that **manifests God**—6:11.
- H. In order for God to be manifested in the flesh, godliness needs to be **expressed in our whole living**—1 John 3:2; 2:28.

- I. God's economy is God coming into us, and **godliness** is **God going out of us**—1 Tim. 1:4; 3:16a:
  1. The Christian life is simply **God coming in** and **God going out**—John 4:14; 7:29.
  2. Because godliness is the expression of God, the Christian life should be a **life that expresses God** and **bears God's likeness** in all things—Heb. 1:3; 2 Cor. 3:18.
  3. First Timothy 2:2 says that we need to lead a **quiet and tranquil life** in all godliness; even in small things, we need to lead a life in all godliness, **everywhere** and in **everything**.
  4. Our church life, our daily life, and our family life are simply **God coming in and God going out all day**—2 Cor. 13:14; 3:18.
- J. The church of the living God is the ultimate mystery of godliness because the proper church life is the **corporate manifestation of God in the flesh**—1 Tim. 3:15-16; Col. 1:15.

The two books to Timothy must be put together as one. The verses we have read are the very kernel of these two books. In these verses we have the word mystery mentioned again, but here the mystery is of godliness. This is not another mystery; this is the same mystery, which is the mystery of the universe, the mystery of God, and the mystery of Christ. All these are different aspects of one mystery, and this mystery in the two books to Timothy is called the **mystery of godliness**. This word godliness means "**God-likeness, liken to God, or like as God**"; that is, we have the **appearance**, the **expression**, and the **manifestation** of God. The manifestation of God is called godliness. So the mystery of godliness means that God in His mystery can be manifested and expressed. First Timothy tells us that godliness is God "manifested in the flesh" (3:16). The mystery of godliness is God manifested in human beings. The mystery of God and the mystery of Christ are just God manifested in humanity. **God manifested in humanity is the mystery of godliness**. How much is implied and expressed in such a short word! (*The Two Great Mysteries in God's Economy, chapter 5*)

#### Day 4

*1 Timothy 4:7-8 - But the profane and old-womanish myths refuse, and exercise yourself unto godliness. For bodily exercise is profitable for a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the present life and of that which is to come.*

### III. "**Exercise yourself unto godliness**"—1 Tim. 4:7b:

- A. The way to conduct ourselves in the church life is to **exercise ourselves unto godliness**—3:15a; 4:7b; 2:2.
- B. We all have to **exercise our spirit** because the mystery of God is with our spirit—Eph. 1:9; 3:3-4, 9; 5:32; Col. 1:26-27; 2:2; 2 Tim. 4:22.
- C. Our Christian life is a life of godliness, which comes out of God's dispensing of Himself into us; this depends upon **our spirit being fully exercised**—2 Cor. 13:14; 2 Tim. 4:22; Philem. 25.
- D. We need to build up the **habit** of exercising our spirit—1 Tim. 4:7b; 1 Cor. 6:17; Eph. 2:22:
  1. A godly life issuing from God's dispensing depends upon the **exercise of our spirit**—1 Tim. 4:7b; John 4:23-24.
  2. If we **do not exercise** our spirit strongly to cooperate with the Lord, God **cannot** dispense Himself into us—2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 8:4, 9.

- E. The word *exercise* implies **forcing**—1 Tim. 4:7b:
1. To exercise is always a forced matter.
  2. Whenever we are in a hard situation, we have to **force ourselves to exercise our spirit**—cf. Rom. 8:28.
  3. If we Christians want to be strong and grow in the Lord, we must **force ourselves to use our spirit**—2 Tim. 4:22; Rev. 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10; Rom. 8:16.

Paul goes on to tell us that we have to **exercise ourselves unto godliness**. This word exercise is a translation of the Greek word that means all kinds of exercise in the Olympic sphere. In the ancient time, during the Olympic games there was much bodily exercise. However, we Christians need to have another kind of exercise, exercise unto godliness. To exercise ourselves unto godliness is to **exercise our spirit so that the mystery of godliness might be touched**. In order to prove that this exercise is the exercise of our spirit, we have to go to 2 Timothy, where Paul says that God has **given us** a spirit that is **strong, loving, and sober**; such a spirit is with a strong will, a loving emotion, and a sober mind. We all have to exercise ourselves unto godliness. We have to exercise our spirit because the very mystery of godliness is **right in our spirit**. Second Timothy 4:22 tells us that the Lord is with our spirit. The Lord Jesus is the very mystery, and **this mystery is in our spirit**. If we are going to express this mystery, if we are going to practice this mystery, then we all have to exercise our spirit.

What is it to exercise ourselves unto godliness, and how can we exercise ourselves unto godliness? Let us suppose that while a few single brothers are living together, one comes in and starts to talk about some worldly things. While this brother is talking about worldly things, right away the others have to exercise their spirit not to join that talk. If they join that talk, they will fall into a snare. By saying, “O Lord Jesus,” they exercise their spirit. Right away, this exercise unto godliness will help that brother come back to his spirit. (*The Two Great Mysteries in God's Economy, chapter 5*)

### Day 5

*Romans 8:6* - For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

*Hebrews 4:12* - For the word of God is living and operative and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow, and able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

- F. To exercise our spirit is to **set our mind on the spirit**—v. 6; Mal. 2:15-16:
1. When we set our mind on the **spirit**, we have the inner sense of life and peace, the sense of **strength, satisfaction, rest, release, liveliness, watering, brightness, and comfort**.
  2. When we set our mind on the **flesh**, we have the inner sense of death, the sense of **weakness, emptiness, uneasiness, restlessness, depression, dryness, darkness, and pain**.
  3. Our Christian life is not according to the standard of right and wrong but according to the **spirit**, and we know the spirit by the **inner sense of life and peace**—Rom. 8:6, 16; 9:1; 2 Cor. 13:14.
- G. To exercise our spirit is to **discern our spirit from our soul**—Heb. 4:12:
1. We should always be on the alert to discern and deny anything that is not of the spirit but of the **soul, the self**—Matt. 16:25; cf. Luke 9:25.
  2. All the time we need to keep our spirit **separate** from our soul—Heb. 4:12; 1 Thes. 5:23.
  3. The **enemy's strategy** is always to **mix** our spirit with our soul.
  4. Whatever we are, whatever we have, and whatever we do must be **in the spirit**; everything that God is to us is **in our spirit**—2 Tim. 4:22.

## Day 6

*2 Timothy 1:6-7 - For which cause I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness.*

- H. In order to prove that the exercise unto godliness is the exercise of the spirit, we need to go to 2 Timothy, where Paul says that God has **given us** a spirit that is **strong, loving,** and **sober**; such a spirit is with a strong will, a loving emotion, and a sober mind—1:7:
1. The word *spirit* in 2 Timothy 1:7 denotes our **human spirit, regenerated** and **indwelt** by the **Holy Spirit**—John 3:6; Rom. 8:16.
  2. To fan into flame the gift of God is related to our **regenerated spirit**—2 Tim. 1:6.
  3. *Of power* refers to our **will**, *of love* to our **emotion**, and *of sobermindedness* to our **mind**—v. 7.
- I. To exercise ourselves unto godliness is to exercise our spirit to **live Christ in our daily life** for the building up of the church as the Body of Christ—1 Tim. 4:7b; Eph. 2:20-22; 4:12, 16; 1 Cor. 14:4, 12.

As Christians, our spirit has been **regenerated**. To be regenerated is to be reinforced. Something stronger and richer has been **added into our being**. This is God's life, which has been added into our spirit. This addition is a real gift. Hebrews 6:4 says that we believers have tasted of the heavenly gift. When we believe in the Lord Jesus, God first gives us the divine life. Second, God gives us the Holy Spirit. Also, He gives us many heavenly things, such as His forgiveness, righteousness, peace, and joy. God has given us justification, reconciliation, and His full salvation. All these were given in addition to God's life and God's Spirit. Actually, all these heavenly things are included in God's life and God's Spirit, which have been added into our spirit. **We have a regenerated and reinforced spirit, a very strong spirit, with a companion.** This companion is the Triune God. The Triune God becomes our companion in our spirit. What an enriched spirit we have!

Now that we have seen the importance of our spirit, we want to see the **exercise of our spirit**. We must build up a habit of exercising our spirit. When I rise up in the morning, the first thing I spontaneously say is "O Lord." To call on the Lord by saying, "O Lord" is a **habit of exercising our spirit**. To say "O Lord" as soon as you rise up in the morning makes a big difference. If you rise up in the morning without saying anything, you may pray in a routine way without really touching the Lord. This is because there is no exercise of your spirit. We have to build up a habit of saying, "O Lord." When we say, "O Lord," we touch the Lord. This is the habit of exercising our spirit.

At times we may be in a hard situation. We may be sick, or we may have lost our job. At that time we **should exercise our spirit**. We **should force** ourselves to say, "O Lord Jesus!" The word exercise implies forcing. To exercise is always a forced matter. When the Olympic athletes are exercising to practice or compete, they must have a strong will. They force themselves to exercise. If we Christians want to be strong and want to grow in the Lord, we must force ourselves to use our spirit. (The Spirit with Our Spirit, chapter 8)