

LIVING AND SERVING ACCORDING TO GOD'S ECONOMY CONCERNING THE CHURCH

(Friday—Second Morning Session)

Message Five

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

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

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.

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.

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.
- 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.
- 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.