**FAKE NEWS vs FAITHFUL NEWS (#3)**

***Godliness Is Profitable For All Things***

When I was born in 1952 a male in America could expect to live to age 65. Today the average life expectancy for a man is 79 years. For a woman it is even higher at 81. Compare that to the life expectancy of someone born in 1900 was just 48 years old. If you go back to the beginning of the Civil War in 1860 it was just 41. In other words, in just 160 years we have literally doubled our life span in America! We are truly living in historic times, for which we thank God.

Of course, the earliest patriarchs in Genesis would get a good belly laugh if we could somehow tell them how “old” we are today. A glance at Genesis 5 puts our lifespans in perspective. Adam was 930 years old “*and he died*.” Seth was 912. Enosh was 815. Cainan was 910. Mahalalel was 895. Jared was 962. Enoch was a mere teen at 365 (but never died). Methuselah made it to 969 to the very year of the flood.

Did those ancient men exercise and eat vegan diets to live so long? What was their secret? My answers are: 1. I don’t know. 2. I don’t care. Whatever it was that gave them nearly an entire millennium on earth is of no interest to me. You want to know why? I’d rather be neighbors with Lazarus in Abraham’s bosom in Paradise for those last 800+ years than shriveled up and a burden to my great-great-great-great grandkids! Scientists’ quest to unlock the secret to longevity is a testament to man’s fear of death and lack of faith in God. Don’t fall for the fake news that science and their religion of secular humanism will be your fountain of youth and your salvation.

We have contrasted in our two previous articles this week the false news from the world and the “faithful sayings” of God. Let’s review, then give a third one:

1. **“*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief*” (1** Timothy 1:15)
2. *“This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.* (I Timothy 3:1)
3. “*For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance*.” (I Timothy 4:8-9)

Read that third one again, carefully. Bodily exercise is not the real issue, spiritual exercise is. When he says bodily exercise profits little he is not saying we must live an ascetic lifestyle, totally unconcerned with our physical needs. He is merely making a contrast for emphasis. It’s much like Jesus did when He said that in comparison to our love for Him we must *“…hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also”* (Lk. 14:26; Matt. 10:35-37). While I must love my family (Col. 3:18-21), I must love Jesus more.

Just so, my physical body is important to God. I Corinthians 6:13-20 says God fully expects us to keep our bodies pure and healthy because they are “*members of Christ*” (v. 13) and we are to “*glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s* (v. 19-20). Bodily exercise is good for us. He says it “*profits a little*.” The NIV and ESV read, “*physical training is of some value*.” Strong’s Greek Lexicon defines *OLIGOS* as “*puny (in extent, degree, duration, value).*” Combine that with Paul’s word for exercise is *GYMNASIA,* and we get the idea that to work out in a gym is profitable. But …

In comparison to our spiritual exercising for *godliness* – working out in a gym is puny in value, duration and degree. If given the option, give priority to your soul over your body. Paul is saying that even if you worked out in a gymnasium and it led to a life equal to Moses *(“Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died. His eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor diminished” –* Deut 34:7), but you lost your soul, you would have gained nothing by such a lifestyle. Jesus would phrase it this way:

*“For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”* (Matt. 16:25-26).

Godliness, by contrast, has unlimited value and duration! *EUSEBEIA* is defined as “piety and devotion towards God.” This kind of “exercise” will be the toughest blood, sweat and tears workout you ever experienced. The legendary Navy S.E.A.L. must go through 24 weeks of intense physical training, followed by 28 weeks of qualification training (that’s a full year of non-stop workouts morning, noon and night!). It’s so tough that only 1% of sailors who enter the program complete it (source: *Navy.com*).

But we spiritual “band of brothers” are a different kind of soldier. Our training, and our warfare, is more than just for this life, it for “*the life that now is, and for that which is to come*.” Think what it takes to be godly. The basic training (i.e. boot camp) that puts us into the Lord’s army requires incredible self-discipline. To become qualified, we must dig deep into God’s word (“*faith comes by hearing*” - Rom. 10:17). That faith leads to “*godly sorrow that leads to repentance unto salvation*” (2 Cor. 7:10). This qualifies you to “*confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus… to be saved*” (Rom. 10:10). This now leads to the final grueling test: giving your body to crucifixion in baptism (Rom. 6:3-5). Having done these things you are now allowed to put on the uniform called the “*armor of God*” (Eph. 6:10-17). Look in the mirror with pride – welcome to God’s army!

Now the real battle begins. Like a S.E.A.L. wearing the coveted Trident on his uniform, and like the Marine living by the sacred code *Semper Fidelis* (“always faithful”) so now you wear the coveted “*cross of Christ”* (Lk. 9:23) and live by the sacred code “*faithful unto death*” (Rev. 2:10).

We see now that becoming, and remaining, a disciple of Christ is an extreme life of self-discipline. It is a non-stop exercise program called ***godliness***! But oh the rewards. Unlike my daily bodily exercise of 10,000 steps that sets off starbursts on my Fitbit and gives me a temporary thrill of achievement, exercising my spiritual body to godliness gives me a satisfaction I can sing about: “Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine, O what a foretaste of glory divine. Heir of salvation, purchase of God, born of his Spirit, washed in His blood.”

Until tomorrow… “If it doesn’t challenge you, it doesn’t change you.” Will you be godly?

Beloved band of brothers, I love you. Rick