

2 Peter 1:6
Hope in the fight

Godliness!



Christians have such differing views of what “godliness” means. Many of the ideas are quite aberrant – quite off the mark. There are millions of Christians, just in America, that tune in every Sunday to watch TV preachers and evangelists literally put on a stage show every week. These people are showman, and as they strut up and down the stage and work the crowd, the people in their congregation and in their TV audience eat this up! THIS,.. they think is a godly man doing kind of weird, but entertaining, “godly” things (because sometimes the Holy Spirit does weird things too)! The preacher, He (or she), is yelling, and screaming, and laughing, and quoting scripture, and pounding their big Bible for dramatic effect, and prophesying on stage - maybe a few healings or slayings - and THAT is people’s idea of a godly person! The fact that each of these showman’s ministries rake in multi-millions in donations is a pretty good indication that the people who watch the show think this is of God – enough so that they send in their money in small and large amounts. Of course, they have been promised that if they do so, God will return their money to them 10-fold and more. Or surely God will heal their disease - guaranteed! That’s is an excellent return on their investment – right. Of course, the flock has just been fleeced and virtually none of them will see that money again, much less the promised increase on their money - and no one is getting healed either. The odds on the televangelists promises coming true are far worse than winning at the local casino. At least casinos let some people win some of the time because they know it is good for business! But a televangelist’s organization are money machines and they know they have cornered the market on dupes, on marks, on easy pickin’s! They don’t have to make sure of anything or back up their claims with facts. They can just make their promises, knowing that a million people who follow their show think they are godly and incapable of deceiving! For my money, I’d say that the terrible cynicism of these TV preachers- cynicism which is obvious to me, will land them in a very hot place in Hell one day! This is not judgmentalism. This is common sense! It is amazing to me, but millions think this is godliness!

~Other people think that **godliness is judgmentalism**. So any speaker that rails against the sins and errors of others is good in their minds! But there is a glitch in our human nature that gravitates to the negatives in others. Of course we have to be negative sometimes! I just was! I hate the things that discredit Chris and make it harder to represent Him! I will always stand against things like that! **[Rev. 2:2]** But to always be looking for flaws in others to show your own intellectual or moral superiority, that is not godliness! That is generally just the flesh masquerading as the Spirit of God! At the same time, there is plenty that is wrong with many denominations, pastors, and churches that must be know and pointed out publicly to save many others from being duped and becoming disillusioned. Disillusionment sidelines many promising Christians! But to judge others –to make it your thing - your passion - is NOT godliness! It’s more like catharsis – which says more about the criticizer than those they feel the need to criticize!



Some people think that godliness is someone having a superior knowledge of the Bible. They can read the Bible in its original languages! Wow! Not many can do that! They must be godly because they know so much! **Seminary professors** MUST be godly because they are experts in the Bible and they write big books that are really hard for the layperson to understand because they just go so deep! That HAS to be godliness. But actually, it isn't.



IT...DOESN'T...MEAN...A...THING!!! I have personally know professors that were truly godly men, and I have know professors that were truly nothing but posers! They knew a lot, but they were unlikeable men - unfair, self-centered, cynical, pretentious, arrogant,.. well, you get the ugly picture! I've know pastors like that also, and plenty of laypeople! They were users of God to try to impress and to gain status – exactly the sin of the priests and other religious leaders of Jesus day! Jesus, who seemed to go easy on sinners, condemned the religious leaders soundly for it and made them look like the evil creatures they really were! These were men, most of which had memorized the entire Old Testament *and* the commentaries that were written on it by the religious experts over the years! It did not raise them one quarter inch in the estimation of Jesus! Please understand that I am not advocating for the idea that the knowledge of scripture is without merit. ***Quite to the contrary!*** We have just learned that knowledge *is a necessity!* If there is any **dominant theme** in this opening passage in 2nd Peter, it is the necessity and the advantage and the usefulness of a true and accurate Mosaic/apostolic knowledge of God which can be gained only through the knowledge of the scriptures – and the more knowledge of it the better! ***But I still contend that true Godliness can only be measured by application*** – by behavior and attitude. Too many Christians look up to religious icons with glass feet because we do not know what Godliness actually is or what it actually looks like! So we let the frauds among us dictate what it is, or what it looks like! Our lack of knowledge and understanding means we have a lack of discretion, of common sense, and it makes us easy marks for the schemes and distractions of Satan.

Here is what we should be asking ourselves! Does a professed Christ-follower love people?! Does an avowed Christ-follower consistently demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit - attributes of Jesus Christ?! Is one's attitude right? Is there humility there and an ability to mingle with and enjoy all people from all walks of life?! Our friendships should transcend age differences - young and old enjoying each other! Or economic differences! Rich or poor should have no bearing on whether we can experience friendship and deep love! Even if there is a large gap in spiritual maturity, it should not deter loving relationship!

Another mark of Godliness is based upon God's passion to redeem and save people to Himself. So, in a godly person, the question must be asked of whether there is a passion and an effort to tell people about Jesus and to give them powerful argument upon powerful argument to come over to His side - *our* side! I have stated time and time again that this is God's passion! He sent His Son, Jesus, to suffer terribly and to die in the place of sinners, so that this passion of God could be fulfilled! It only stands to reason that if we are a true follower of Jesus Christ, we will share this passion of God and fully join in His effort to win the world to Himself. After all, this has been God's method – to use **His people** to reach those who are **not yet His people** so that they **become His people** and join His effort to **reach more people** with the Gospel of Jesus! Godliness manifests itself in the active caring for the souls of people - in caring for the well-being of God's people and for the spiritual and physical well-being of those vast throngs of people outside of God's people! A passion for people and for their souls is godly.



It is interesting to me that “*brotherly kindness*” is listed right on the heels of “*Godliness*”. I think that is intentional because this subject is very close to God's heart. Since Cain murdered his brother Able, God has hated the enmity, mean-spiritedness, and rancor that has generally characterized the human race ever since! *I've told you this before. I was blessed as a boy, because my brother was a kind brother. I will always be grateful for his contributions to my life starting when we were kids. There was 10 years between us, but he still treated me with love, tenderness, and kindness. I was a snot-nosed little kid, and he was a “big boy” already, but he took me everywhere he went on the handlebars of his big rusty balloon-tired bicycle! I was so proud of my brother and weirdly, he seemed proud of me for no reason at all that I could see! Later, as we got older, we would have long talks on our bunks, even some rather juvenile theological discussions, but the older we got the deeper and more involved, and more satisfying the conversations became. He was genuinely interested in what I had to think, and so I thought about things so that I could converse with him – really, actually, **so that I could be like him!** That tenderness that we had for each other from the start has never left us! We still to this day enjoy talking over in depth about spiritual things and about our experiences in church ministry. He still encourages me and provides insight into complicated situations in ministry.

Brotherly kindness is a mindset of approval and encouragement toward others – not just your siblings, but toward *everyone*. It is a mindset of wanting to do all that you can to see people succeed and be fulfilled in their endeavors. It is actually quite rare among people. People often love to witness a good failure. In fact there is a whole genre of “fail” videos on You Tube, that immortalize people’s most embarrassing moments! Some clips go “viral” and those folks who were captured on film in the midst of awkward moments and humiliating failure may not live it down for 20 years! It is not a case of brotherly love, that is for sure, but of ridicule - of the human proclivity to enjoy someone else’s humiliation, pain, and shame!



The apostle here is reminding us that kindness, caring, and seeking someone else’s success, is the calling card of the Christ-follower - not **harshness**, not **ridicule**, not seeking to **embarrass**, **put down**, or **point out the failures** of someone else. It is our job as Christians to help those who may lag behind – who struggle – to come alongside and lend a hand, to tell them it’s okay – it could happen to anyone! We help cover for them, if possible, so that no one sees their failure. Maybe we can help them to succeed, and if we can, we could not be happier. When they succeed, we succeed! We feel like we have done the Lord’s work – because, in fact, we have! Especially in the church, when someone catches on to a ministry job here, and is fulfilled in it, that is a victory for everyone! Things get done well and in a timely manner, and that is a good thing for the church body! When someone is miscast in a position of service to Jesus in the church and they just cannot seem to figure it out, it is everyone’s job to bear with their weakness with patience. Eventually, we gently help them understand that perhaps they are needed in another position. I guarantee they will be grateful to get out of the job they are not doing well in! And they may very well *excel* in the next job they hold which hopefully is better suited to their gifts and interests. Brotherly love requires that we pray for each other and work for each other and cheer each other on. **Hebrews 10:24** - “*And let us consider how to spur one another on to love and good deeds*”. The operative words here are “*Consider how to*”! We think about who to encourage and help and how we can do it. We are aware when someone is in distress, and their distress becomes our own! We are called to show kindness/ encouragement!

Then the apostle says that we are to add to our brotherly kindness, love! I would refer us to 1 Cor. 13, where another apostle lists the practical characteristics of love.

Hettinga paraphrase – [1 Cor. 13]

Vs. 4 - “Like the love of God, real love is patient and KIND.” Then, interestingly, the apostle Paul goes into what it isn’t! **“What it ISN’T is envious, or boastful, or proud, or rude, or self-seeking. It is also not short-tempered, and it has the briefest memory of wrongs done to it. It does not enjoy when someone fails – anyone – even if they deserve to fail! Love runs on truth and glories in it! It is protective, extends trust because it remains optimistic about that person! Love keeps slogging ahead even when the going gets hard. In other words, it perseveres! True agape love will not fail – ever! Everything else fails on this cursed and fallen planet, but not agape love – not love modeled after God’s own love. That love will surely succeed”.**

LOVE IS PATIENT
love is not
jealous or
boastful
love is kind
love does not
insist on
its own way
ARROGANT
OR RUDE
LOVE BEARS ALL THINGS
believes all things
HOPES endures
all things all things
LOVE NEVER ENDS

When the love of God succeeds, we **ALL** succeed and the purposes of God are energized and encouraged among us! In fact, everything about Christianity operates on love! It is the #1 ingredient in faith, goodness, in the practical application of the knowledge of God, and even to the attributes of self-control and perseverance! We exercise self-control and perseverance out of love. To **not** be self-controlled is surely detrimental to our brothers and sisters in Christ, so we think of them when we exercise self-control. The last thing we would want to do is bring discouragement! To not **persevere** is to disappoint everyone and to be a poor example of what it means to follow Jesus. We could not in good conscience do that to our brothers and sisters in Christ so we keep on going even when discouraged or fearful! People are depending upon us to keep going and finish well! Then **love** is the key ingredient of Godliness, emulating God Himself who is Love! And love is also the key ingredient in brotherly kindness, as the warmth of heart-felt love makes being kind easy!

Stay soft. Do not let the disappointments of this world harden you and make you cynical!

[Deut. 20:1-8] “*If any of you are afraid, go home, or you will dishearten the rest of us*”