

The Nature of Godliness

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Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0 : 00] Well, today we begin a new series of studies, as Pastor Jason mentioned last week. Five of us will be team teaching, myself, Pastor Jason, Roger Cryan, Dennis Beery, and Mark Aikens.

And our text is a book that was first published in 1666, written by an English Puritan named Thomas Watson. A couple hundred years later, Charles Spurgeon commended Watson's writings as, quote, A Happy Union of Sound Doctrine, Heart-Searching Experience, and Practical Wisdom.

Now, the Puritans loved long titles on the books that they wrote and published. But at least by the time that you read the title, you knew what was inside the cover.

And you knew whether or not you really wanted to buy that book. You know, sometimes we buy it and then we're disappointed that we ever spent the money. Here, they let you know right up front what you're getting by a lengthy title.

So, here's the title. The Godly Man's Picture Drawn with a Scripture Pencil. Or, Some Characteristic Marks of a Man Who is Going to Heaven.

[1 : 23] So, that's the book. The Godly Man's Picture Drawn with a Scripture Pencil. Or, Some Characteristic Marks of a Man Who is Going to Heaven.

Now, we say a picture is worth a thousand words. And so, Watson wants us to know what godliness is. What it looks like. What does a godly man look like.

So, he grabs Scripture and he uses Scripture as a pencil to draw his picture of the godly man. Because Scripture describes the godly man.

It defines him. It shows him to us in different settings. It gives us examples of godly men and women. And so, with such, Watson is sketching out a picture for us of the godly man.

But actually, he gives us a couple dozen pictures. It could be the godly man's pictures. Because he's going to give us like 24 different pictures.

[2 : 33] Little snapshots. So, it's more like a scrapbook. Where you see the godly man in this context. And what he looks like here. And then, you see another picture of him over here. Maybe here he's with the family.

Here he's at church. Here he's working. Here he's out in the neighborhood. And we see these different pictures of the godly man. In their different settings. And the 24 pictures that he takes from the pencil of Scripture.

Then gives us the one composite whole. The picture of the godly man. Now, the subtitle or the alternative title, I think, is instructive too.

It's like these guys couldn't decide on the two titles. And so, they just gave us both of them. Take your pick. But this second title teaches us something important about godliness.

See if you catch it. I'm going to read the title again. What does it teach us? The second title. What does it teach us about godliness? I want you to tell me. The godly man's picture.

[3 : 35] Drawn with a scripture pencil. Or some characteristic marks of a man who is going to heaven. What does the second title tell us?

What does it infer? Jim? There's something that's distinguishing this man that he's going to heaven. Okay. There's something distinguishing this man that he's going to heaven. Anybody else? Yeah, Becky. I'm just thinking that a godly man does go to heaven. Okay. Jim, you're right.

Your wife put it more clearly for us. Thank you. That's why God gave her to you. So, that's it. The first statement said the godly man's picture.

And the second says some characteristic marks of a man who is going to heaven. So, the godly man is the man going to heaven. The man going to heaven is a godly man.

[4 : 36] Now, that's surely what he's inferring by the title. Is that true? Is that what scriptures teach? Well, more on that later as we get into it.

So, today I'm introducing the subject, the nature of godliness. What is it? And I think the simplest definition that I've come up with that is just helpful for memory's sake is that to be godly is to be godlike.

To be godly is to be godlike. It's the restored image of God in man. We were made in his image. We fell. Much of our godlikeness was marred.

Our moral likeness to God was marred by that fall. And God is restoring us into his image by the work of redemption. So, to be godly is to be godlike.

Jesus Christ is the perfectly godlike man. So, to be godly is to be like Jesus. To be godly is to be like God. Now, consider five points then about godliness.

[5 : 46] Godliness. The first thing is that godliness is a supernatural thing. A supernatural thing. And we must never forget that. It's not a product of fallen human nature.

By nature we are ungodly. By grace we are godly. We become godly. But by nature we are more Satan like than godlike.

And that's why Jesus says you are your father the devil. Because you do the works of your father. He was a liar. And a murderer from the beginning. So, if we are to ever bear godliness and godlikeness in our life, it's got to be something God does.

It's got to be a supernatural thing coming from outside of ourselves. Watson speaks of fallen human nature. The fallen human heart. Being biased toward evil.

Like the bias of the ball. Now, he's speaking here about a very old game. About a hundred years ago, my brother Tom and I were teenagers.

[6 : 54] And we were playing tennis in a tournament up at Niles, Michigan. And in between the matches, we had time to kill. So, we drove around and we came upon this, what looked like a putting green.

Perfect grass. Manicured grass. And a bunch of old people. Old men out there. And they were rolling balls on that. So, we stopped. And they were more than happy to explain everything about the game to us.

And you rolled a little ball out first. Smaller white ball. And then you roll your bowls. And you try to get your bowl as close as you can to that little ball.

Now, those bowls are round, but they're not symmetrically round. It's like the sides of them have been shaved off. So, they're round this way. But this way, they've been shaved off.

So, they're more oblong in that sense. And as they roll them, they roll straight. But the sides aren't shaved off evenly.

[7 : 56] One side has a little more left on it than the other. And so, as the bowl is rolled, as it's going fast, it goes straight. But as it slows down to a stop, at the very end, it will bend.

And the bend always follows the bias of the bowl. So, if the bias is on this side, as it's rolled and comes to a stop, at the very end, it bends to the right.

It always does. It never bends to the left. So, Watson is saying our hearts are biased toward evil. They don't bend toward God. This is fallen human nature as we come into the world as sinners.

We've inherited Adam's sinful nature. The image of Adam, not the perfect image of God.

And so, we bend away from God toward Satan, sin, self. Never toward God.

[8 : 57] Even our best works in this life outside of Christ are sinful. Splendid sins. Filthy rags.

Missing faith. Missing the motive of love to God. The glory of God. So, if ever our hearts are to bend toward God, something supernatural has to take place.

What is it? The new birth. We've got to be born over again. Just like that bowl, if it's ever to bend the other direction, it's got to be retooled.

We have to be supernaturally retooled so that we will now bend toward God. And that's what the new birth is. That's why Jesus says nobody can get to heaven without being born again.

Because you'll never come to Christ. Your nature is biased against Him. You don't come into the world unbiased. Even-handed.

[9 : 57] No, you come with a bend away from Him. So, if you're ever to come to Christ in faith and repentance, God must retool your heart. That's a supernatural work. That's the new birth.

It's not done by man. It's done by the Spirit of God. It's a birth from heaven. And Watson paints the picture of the garden.

He says, weeds grow of themselves. Anybody in this garden knows that. Flowers are planted. So, if you see begonias and tulips and petunias in the garden, you say, those were planted.

If you see weeds, you just say, they grow of themselves. And so, if you ever find a flower of godliness in your heart, you can know that God planted it. Watson says, godliness is a celestial plant that comes from the new Jerusalem. And so, if you find anything of that celestial plant in your heart and life, you can know that God transplanted it into your soil.

[11:02] It's the fruit of the Spirit. It's something God produces. So, forgiveness is godlike, isn't it? God forgives the worst of sinners.

Now, you try to be godlike without God. If you think that I don't need anything supernatural here, I can just be godlike. Well, try to forgive someone who has deeply wounded you.

To forgive them from the heart. And to love them. And you'll realize at once that, no, if that plant is ever to be found in my heart, God's got to plant it there.

It's going to have to be supernatural. Not natural John. It's going to have to be supernatural God. And so it is with many other things. God loves his enemies.

That's godlike. That's godly. To love your enemies. To pray for their blessing. For God's good upon their bodies, their work, their souls.

[12:06] For God to do good to them. That doesn't grow in the heart by nature. But that's the plant that God is planting in us.

Transplanting in us. And teaching us. To love our neighbor like we love ourselves. That doesn't grow on nature. But God plants. Supernaturally plants such things in our hearts.

So Watson ends this section by saying, A man has no more power to change himself than to create himself. Could you create yourself? No.

That's kind of... There is no self to create yourself. Neither can you change yourself. It's a supernatural work.

So we're God's workmanship. We're his piece of art. It's what he's done. So it's... Godliness is supernatural. Second thing, Godliness is an inward thing.

[13:03] It's heart work. It lies chiefly in the heart. Indeed, it's the very life of God in the soul of man. It's not mere outward reformation of behavior that leaves the heart unchanged within.

It's not, as Paul Tripp says, it's not stapling good apples on a bad apple tree. No, it's what Jesus says. It's making the heart good so that the fruit will be good.

So, yes, it's a supernatural thing and it's an inward thing. It starts in the heart. This godliness is something that has its beginning here and then works out.

So, God desires truth. Where? On the inward parts. And that's exactly where he puts it. What is the promise of the new covenant?

That I will write my law upon their hearts. So, those same hearts that were biased against me. And by the way, the heart is the mind as it thinks, the affections as they desire, and the will as it chooses.

[14:09] All of those faculties of our heart were bent away from God. And so, when God changes our nature and supernaturally works in our hearts, those same faculties are now bent a different way.

So, it's the same instruments, but they're playing different music. The heart now goes Godward. The mind loves to go Godward.

The affections are now moving in God's direction. And the will is now choosing what pleases Him. So, it's an inward thing. He writes His law upon the heart.

Not with ink, 2 Corinthians 3.3. Not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God. Not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts. There's the inward thing that godliness is.

It's a heart that's now in sync with God. That walks and talks with God. That lives with God. Is conformed to God through that fellowship of walking and talking with Him.

[15:15] A heart that's devoted to Him. That loves Him. That sees Him as our greatest good. So, it's an inward thing. But thirdly, it's an extensive thing.

Though it begins in the heart, it doesn't stay there. He compares it to leaven. What happens when you put leaven in a lump of bread? It spreads to the whole loaf.

And that's the way godliness is. It starts in the heart and then it just spreads through the whole being and life of the man, the woman, in whom it's planted. Godliness cannot be kept in the heart any more than hot lava can be kept inside of an erupting volcano.

If it's inside, it's coming out. And if God plants true godliness in the heart, then it will be seen in a Godward life. A life that's oriented toward God now instead of away from Him.

So, now, God is the center. He's the sun of our solar system and everything in our life. And I mean everything. It's just, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, He's now the sun and everything has relation to Him.

[16:35] Whatever it is we do. That's what godliness is, you see. It's an extensive thing. It runs through the whole of life. Fourth, fourth, we've seen it's a supernatural thing, an inward thing, an extensive thing.

Fourth, it's a glorious thing. And here Watson says, as the jewel to the ring, so is godliness to the soul. It beautifies it.

Now, the setting of your ring, ladies, may be beautiful, but it's nothing like the jewel in that setting. And Watson says, just as the setting makes the ring beautiful, so godliness makes the soul beautiful.

There's nothing that's not beautiful about God. He's altogether lovely. He's the king in His beauty. And sin is what's ugly. Godliness makes us beautiful.

So the more godly, the more beautiful. The more godlike, the more glorious. And that's the makeover that God is doing in us, moving us from ugly to beautiful.

[17:48] Moving us from Satan-like to godlike. Process in this life, but one day to be completed. And we will share in the glory of God.

The beauty that we see in God will then be seen in us. Perfect moral likeness in His image. And then we'll shine like the stars with the glory of God.

It's a glorious thing, and we need to see that. We're not chasing after something ugly. We are chasing after beauty. And Watson wants us to know that right up front as we're opening this book on godliness.

And lastly, godliness is a permanent thing. It was said of young David that he had a ruddy complexion. A reddish complexion.

His skin was evidently redder than most. Now, you wouldn't say of someone who blushed that he had a ruddy complexion, would you? No, a red complexion is permanent, not just a passing blush.

[18:56] No, it's the color all the time. And so Watson says, a blush of godliness, a blush of godliness, is not enough to discern a real Christian.

Rather, godliness is the habitual complexion of the soul. Now, we might say that, okay, even ruddy David may get the flu and his face go white, right?

But, but his complexion is red. That's, that's who he is, that's what he is, and yes, he gets sick, but he's got a red face. That's his complexion.

And, and the Christian, we get sick, and, and, and we don't always bear that, that complexion of godliness, but, but generally, that is our complexion.

That's what, the characteristic marks of the man going to heaven. You see, it's the characteristic mark. It's the, the predominant mark, the permanent thing about us, not just a blush or a sickness.

[19:57] Watson puts it this way, there's a great difference between a stake in the hedge and a tree in the garden. Now, they're both wood, aren't they? But, a stake rots and molders, but a tree having life in it abides and flourishes.

Even so, when godliness has taken root in the soil, it abides to eternity. For God's seed remains in him. First, John 3 and verse 9.

So, it's, it's something permanent. Godliness is being engraved in the heart by the Holy Spirit as with the point of a diamond that can never be erased, he says.

So, since it's the work of God, it's a permanent thing, not just a mere blush for a moment. Not the fits and starts of man's mere resolve which can wither and die overnight.

When God does a work, it sticks. So much so that Paul can write to the Philippians and say, that of this we can be sure that he who began a good work in you will complete it to the day of Jesus Christ.

[21:01] Did he begin the work of godliness? It's going to stick. It's going to be permanent because it's God's work and not yours. So, godliness is supernatural, it's inward, it's extensive, it's glorious, and it's permanent.

Any questions on what godliness is then? That's just the first section. I've got more for you, but we'll pause if there's questions or comments on those five things.

Anybody? Yeah, guy. This one just came to my mind and I'm sure everyone knows it. Read me, I have an old King James because I'm old. In Philippians chapter 2, verse 12, wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. That kind of makes me tremble if it's stopped there. 13, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of these good pleasure.

[22 : 13] Justification is my grace alone. Sanctification, though cooperative on our part, is also my grace alone. Amen. Amen. Good. Alright, we'll see more.

I don't want to steal the thunder of the men that come after me in the other chapters. Next, Watson gives a reproof to such as are only pretenders to godliness.

Now, this might be strange to us and we think, wow, he's right at the beginning of the book and he's giving a reproof to those who are mere pretenders of godliness.

Well, there's a reason for it as we'll see but this is for those who only make a show of godliness.

Their beauty is all paint or we would say makeup that covers the reality of the matter.

Our Savior called them whited sepulchers or whitewashed tombs. they're pretty on the outside but full of dead men's bones and corruption within. Now, I learned, I like birds but I learned something about birds from Watson.

[23 : 22] He says, hypocrites are like the swan which has white feathers but a black skin. Did you know that? Probably not. Why don't you know that?

Because usually they have feathers on, don't they? And all you see is the feathers. But God knows they have a black skin. And there's a lot of people who have white feathers of godliness but their heart's black.

It's unchanged. It still runs after and bends toward the things of self and sin and not towards God. And that's their element. They don't jump out of the mud puddle like the kitten and go and cleanse themselves in the blood of Jesus.

They just wallow in it because that's their nature. Their heart is still black. So that's the kind of person that Watson is going to give this warning to. Because when we speak of godliness we have to know if you've ever read your Bible we have to know that Satan is the master of counterfeit godliness.

In fact he himself is an angel of light. Dresses up like an angel of light. So it's no surprise if his ministers and those who serve him appear to be something that they're not.

[24 : 36] so Jesus says you have a name that you live but you're dead. Revelation 3.1 You have a reputation of being godly but that far exceeds the reality.

Well he starts with a question. Why do people content themselves with a show of godliness? Why are people content just to have the outward pretext and mask of godliness rather than the real thing?

I think it's interesting. He says this may help to keep up their reputation as a good person. Don't you know people that like to let you know about their good deeds?

Maybe they're trying to impress you and so they tell you they go to church or they're being kind to neighbor and they tell you the religious things that they do the godly things that they do the actions of a godly man or woman but all their concern is is that they appear to be godly like King Saul when Samuel told him because of his not obeying God that God was going to rip the kingdom out of his hands and give it to someone better than him like David and Saul said oh I have sinned but please honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel come with me let them see you the great prophet and priest of Israel walking with me that I might be honored in the sight of the elders and the people even though I am rejected by God you see he wanted just the outward show and so people are ambitious to gain a good reputation so they dress themselves in the garb of religion so that others might consider them saints but hear this penetrating question from Watson but what good is it to have others commend them when their own conscience condemns them and here's one even better what good will it do a man when he is in hell to have others thinking that he's gone to heaven that's that happens a lot doesn't it go to any funeral and the impression given will be look at the religious the good deeds that the person did he's obviously in hell what good does it do to have the whole congregation thinking you're in heaven if you're really in hell so this is an important point and that's why

Bunyan is sounding the warning or not Bunyan but Watson is sounding the warning beware of counterfeit godliness he gives six reasons why it's such a terrible sin I can barely do more than read

them number one to have only a show of godliness is a god enraging sin it stirs up the wrath and anger of god the pretender carries christ in his bible but not in his heart so he's misusing the name of the lord calling on his name dealing in holy things but all for unholy ends just to make himself look better than he is so he's using the things of god to promote himself the most ungodly of things and this is to abuse god to his face to pretend to serve him while you're serving self and the devil and he says nothing so stirs up the wrath of god than hypocrisy now you've read the gospels jesus had words of grace for prostitutes tax collectors and sinners didn't he they loved to hear him he had grace for them but who were jesus most harsh words for the hypocrites in fact there's a whole chapter what is it matthew 23 woe to you hypocrites judgment upon you hypocrites because when you travel land and sea and finally make somebody a disciple of you you make him two fold the creature of hell that you yourself are wow jesus never said that to a tax collector that i read of in the bible but he said it to people who acted religious and were regarded as the most religious people of the day the pharisees it's a god enraging sin just read matthew 23 secondly to only make a show of godliness is self delusion it's self trickery as james says it's to deceive your own souls what is more stupid than cheating yourself robbing yourself that's what this sin does the hypocrite wrongs many people but he wrongs himself the most deceiving others while he lives but robbing himself when he dies so it's a self delusion a self robbery pretending faith in life but left with no real faith when he dies number three to have only a name and make a show of godliness is odious to man as well as god haven't you found that the wicked hate hypocrites and usually they spot them quicker than the church does they seem to know what the marks of godliness are and when they see a man claiming to be religious and see that he doesn't match up his complexion is not godlike what do they do they rail on him even more so than the out and out sinner that doesn't even make a claim to be religious and so it is that to have a mere show of godliness is not only odious to god it stinks in the nostrils of man fourth hypocrites are double losers they fast and pray and go to church read their bible give their money do many good deeds but they lose all that time that they've invested why because they don't get anything for it there's no reward for it do you remember what jesus said be careful not to do your acts as righteousness before men so that men will see you and make you

[31 : 12] seem to be religious and righteous because if you do it for men you'll have no reward from your father in heaven no reward i mean all this praying all this fasting all this serving god giving and no reward from god that's what jesus says when you pray don't be like the hypocrites they love to pray standing in the synagogues on the street corners to be seen by men that's their motivation i tell you the truth there's the statement you may not believe it but it's true they have received their reward in full they got all that they're going to get and what a poor reward it is the praise of fickle men will be praising you today and condemning you tomorrow they lose once they lose all their investment but they lose twice because god's wrath is upon them not only do they not get a positive reward they actually get hell in the end they're double losers hypocrisy is a double losing sin fifth to have only a pretense of godliness will yield no comfort at death painted gold does not enrich a man painted water does not quench his thirst painted godliness will offer no comfort in death number six you who have nothing but a mask of godliness expose yourself to satan scorn not only to god scorn and to man scorn but to satan scorn what did what did the philistines do when they had captured the israelite champion samson and now they have a feast and they want to celebrate what do they do with samson they bring him out to make sport of him to laugh at him and that's the picture that watson draws to say that's that's what the devil and demons will be doing in hell making sport of the hypocrite and he puts these words in the demon's mouth has all your religion come to this you who so often defied me have you now come to dwell with me could you find no way to hell but by religion and so hypocrisy exposes us to satan's scorn well take heed let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall it was bunyan that said of some who were traveling to the celestial city that they found at the very gate of heaven that there was a doorway to hell and that's why Jesus sounded this warning more than anybody else because he says many will make that journey all the way to the celestial city and it's only till they get to the gate that they learn that there is a way to hell from the gate of heaven itself for Jesus said not not a few but many will say to me in that day knock on the door wait for it to open and be surprised come on

Lord I did all these things for you and what is the word from inside the closed door depart from me I never knew you you worker of iniquity he sees behind all the outward form of godliness to the heart and he calls it what it is and that's why Watson starts with the warning don't content yourself don't settle for a counterfeit godliness that's what he's saying don't settle for the status quo don't look

around and see what what Christendom in America looks like and say well I like them don't settle for that we're being called to be godly like God is godly and so seek him no it's true that the seeds of hypocrisy are in every heart I have them there is something in me that wants you to think better of me than what I really am I would like to think that you think

I'm more of a man of prayer than what I really am I would like you to think I'm a better father husband whatever than what I really am there are those seeds in my flesh and they're in your heart too so the most godly people can have the seeds of hypocrisy in their heart and they can stumble and fall into those hypocritical statements and actions so how do we know whether we're a true blooded hypocrite or we're just a Christian who's not been perfectly made godly and so we still have the seeds of hypocrisy that sprout from time to time what's the difference well first of all the hypocrite's really not all that concerned about whether he's a hypocrite so if you're concerned and it drives you to examine yourself as scripture calls us to see if we really be in the faith to see if we really are the real deal then that's good but the hypocrite's not that concerned he's got the outward appearance it satisfies others that he's a

Christian it even satisfies himself but if I'm truly the Lord's and he's really begun this work of godliness in me when I give way to my flesh that wants to fool you I need to confess it I need to own it and renounce it and bring it to the blood of Jesus and say cover it Lord Jesus not to lie down in it and say this is natural this is my element I'm happy here this is such a pastoral word from Watson Christian if you mourn for hypocrisy yet find this sin so potent so powerful that you cannot get the mastery of it go to Christ beg of him that he would exercise his kingly office in your soul that he would subdue this sin and put it under the yoke beg of Christ to exercise his spiritual surgery upon you desire him to lance your heart and cut out the rotten flesh and that he would apply the medicine of his blood and heal you of your hypocrisy say that prayer of

David often may my heart be blameless that is sound the real thing let my heart be blameless toward your decrees that I may not be put to shame Lord let me be anything rather than a hypocrite so be sure that whatever you have of godliness that it's the real thing some of you have testimonies that you were hypocrites and the glory of your testimony is that God didn't let you stay in your own fooled condition but he sought you out and he found you and he revealed to you you were just a painted sepulcher you had no heart love for Jesus you still loved your sin your will was not bent to obey Jesus laws because you didn't love him it was still bent on going your own and God revealed that to you and you came to Jesus as one who had been a painted hypocrite one of those sins that God hates really hates and when you cried for mercy he had mercy on you and now you're singing his praise as you're living to his praise and there's no difference there's all the difference in the world between what you had and what you are and you praise

[39 : 08] God for that well if you find yourself in this study to be a painted godly man painted godly woman I trust you'll come to Christ and taste the real thing in his note to the reader the introduction of his book Watson has this to say to us Christian aspire after godliness that's a word we don't use much anymore aspire seek after godliness look at the saints characteristics here in my book the pencil drawing from the scripture and never leave off until you've got them stamped upon your own soul this is the grand business that should swallow up your time and thoughts and that the God of grace will effectually accomplish this shall be the prayer of him who is yours in Christian affection Thomas Watson that was his prayer that we wouldn't stop until more and more we start bearing that godlike image so so as as the men come and present the picture of godliness what we're being called to do is to take that picture and and hold it right beside you and stand in the mirror and say do these two objects in the mirror look alike and and if not that's where we've got work to do we've got we've got a god to seek and we've got things to do to aspire to seek after godliness to give ourselves to the discipline of godliness could it be that

Watson's prayer will be answered in this class in the next couple months his 350 year old prayer will be answered today in our hearts next week in the following week that this god of grace will effectually accomplish this shall be the prayer of him who is yours in Christian affection Thomas Watson let's add our prayers to his let's pray god make us godly for your glory and for our good we ask in Jesus name amen