

Intro:

Last week we talked about prayer, specifically *evangelistic prayer*, something we are enjoined to offer for all men, but especially for kings and those in authority.

This week I don't plan on progressing in our text at all, I want to take some time to examine two words at the end of verse 2 and talk about what they are and how they are achieved in the Christian life.

The two words are 'godliness' and 'dignity'. The KJV translates the second word as 'honesty', but I think 'dignity' is a better translation.

One of my commentators says:

"These last two words mark the sphere of the Christian life."¹

The words have to do not just with internal qualities of character, but something that is visible to the outside world. They have to do with what others think of you.

There is a sense in which you shouldn't care what others think of you.

You shouldn't be so dominated by what other people think that you:

- Indulge in sinful behaviour so that you aren't thought to be 'weird'
- Slavishly follow the fashions of this world because you want to fit in

Think here of the young person who has to have the latest \$100 pair of jeans with the rip in just the right place because 'everyone else is wearing them'. [I don't know what I am talking about, I don't even know if that is the current style...]

- Are afraid to speak up for Christ or for righteousness because you are worried about what other people will think.

But with these two words, you should care what the world thinks of you:

Godliness...

Dignity...

Read 1 Tim 2.1-2

Proposition: The kind of life that most effectively testifies to the reality of your Christianity is one that reflects *godliness* and *dignity*.

¹ John Peter Lange, "1 Timothy" in *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, p. 28.

I. Godliness: a pious manner of life

A. Root meanings: reverence and respect

1. The root, seb-, has the idea of ‘shrinking back from’ or ‘awe’, ‘reverential fear’.
2. Etymologically, eusebeia would then be the ‘good shrinking’, or the ‘good fear’.

B. Thus, the term first speaks of attitude:

1. In Gk usage, it has the idea of ‘a proper attitude toward the gods’, ‘piety’.
2. It also has reference to a proper attitude toward other men, not ‘reverence,’ but ‘respect.’

Proper conduct towards others is respectfulness. So we teach our children:

- To respect the property of others
- To speak kindly to one another
- To settle disputes by appealing to an authority, not resorting to blows (or biting!)

C. The term is a prominent one in the Pastoral epistles (1, 2 Tim, Titus)

1. It is a pious manner of life that:
 - a. Is not controlled by the Law as is Jewish piety
 - b. Is not consisting in cultic rituals as is Greek piety
 - c. Is not merely correct theology, correct ideas about God
 - d. Is not a virtue one possesses (like love, joy, peace)
 - e. Is a manner of life that becomes or accompanies sound doctrine
2. It is a manner of life that is intentionally noticeable to those on the outside

“While his adversaries, or at least most of them, are not concerned about their influence on non-christians, the author believes that a way of life ἐν εὐσεβείᾳ can elicit a verdict from those who are without by confronting them with piety, with the honouring and serving of God.”²

² *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vols. 5-9 edited by Gerhard Friedrich. Vol. 10 compiled by Ronald Pitkin., ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed., 7:183 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-c1976).

- a. This can result in persecution (2 Tim 3.12)
- b. But it is the model for Christian leadership
 - 1) From the pastor (1 Tim 3.7)
 - 2) To the slave (1 Tim 6.1)
 - 3) For women (Titus 2.3)
 - 4) For evangelists (Titus 2.7-8)

There is a great risk to a Christian testimony when it comes to those without. It is the risk of hypocrisy.

- None of us lives absolutely pure lives
- But all of us live public lives, as Christians

Your friends, your family, your neighbours, your acquaintances should know that you are a Christian.

But be prepared to be held to a standard of godliness by them!

Now, in order to be better at godliness, we need to also develop our second term in our lives, not only *godliness* but also *dignity*.

II. Dignity: a commanding character

A. The Greek understanding of this term

1. You recall that ‘godliness’ has a root that refers to ‘reverence’, ‘fear’, ‘awe’ — the ‘shrinking back’ quality behind all reverence and respect
2. This term is anything that ‘evokes’ or motivates that ‘shrinking back’
 - a. The gods are lofty beings whose loftiness evokes the shrinking back
 - b. The dignity of a royal person, or a high official (like a president or prime minister) evokes a ‘shrinking back’

A certain awe and respect because of the dignity of the office...

- c. The dignity of a royal throne calls for a ‘shrinking back’

d. The sound of a piece of music can call for a ‘shrinking back’

3. When used of men, the term speaks of a character quality of internal dignity and honour

B. The limitation of the term

1. Not every sound or fine speech or adornment has this quality
 - a. The witty answer (which the Greeks loved) didn’t have dignity
 - b. The easy grace in word and gesture (also loved) didn’t have dignity
2. The term includes an inescapable orderliness and solemnity and seriousness (sometimes translated ‘gravity’ in KJV)

“The Greek appreciated [the witty remark or the easy grace in word and gesture], but did not retreat from them in admiration and respect. If σεμνότης was to be maintained the noble mean of seriousness had not to become a forbidding severity; on the other hand it certainly could not be charming or jesting grace.”³

3. Aristotle taught that this dignity is the mid-point between arrogance and subservience⁴

C. The Christian testimony of spiritual dignity – always with a view to the outside, to what other people think

1. 1 Tim 2.2: if you don’t have godliness and dignity, what impact will that have on people for whom you are evangelistically praying?
2. 1 Tim 3.4: if a pastor doesn’t have children who reflect dignified submission to God and parental authority, what impact does that have on the pastors teaching authority in the church?
3. Titus 2.7: if an evangelist like Titus doesn’t have dignity, what impact does that have on his admonitions to the men and women of the churches in his charge?

I hope you can see that these two qualities have a tremendous relevance to your life and your testimony.
How are they best developed?

³ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vols. 5-9 edited by Gerhard Friedrich. Vol. 10 compiled by Ronald Pitkin., ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed., 7:193 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-c1976).

⁴ William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, p. 69.

III. Quiet and peaceable: the environment where godliness flourishes (1 Tim 2.2)

A. Our passage calls for prayer for the purpose of a quiet and peaceable life

1. Of course, this is best achieved under Christian rulers
2. But be that as it may, it is quite clear that the quiet and peaceable life is the place where godliness and dignity flourishes

B. Our world – is it quiet and peaceable, generally speaking?

1. Our world is loud, brash, pursuing pleasures and the *rush* of exciting experience
2. Our world isn't conducive to producing godliness and dignity

The bar scene is boisterous, loud, in your face pursuit of pleasure.

The sporting arena seeks the roar of the crowd, the thrill of the moment.

The modern music and culture are all focused on sensuality, bright lights, frenzied experience.

C. The quiet Christian life – as much as possible should become the delight of the devoted Christian, concerned with his testimony

1. Do you want to have an impact on others for God?
2. Do you want to be godly?
3. Do you want to be dignified?
4. Do you want to see others come to Christ as a result of your testimony?
5. Then order your life with quietness and peace
 - a. Minimize the place the world's noise has in your life
 - b. Maximize the simple, the quiet, the peaceable following of Christ
 - c. Pursue godliness and dignity – study the Bible to see what God would have you to be

Conclusion:

Proposition: The kind of life that most effectively testifies to the reality of your Christianity is one that reflects *godliness* and *dignity*.

We talk about a desire to see our church grow, to be evangelists, to win others to Christ...

Let's not let our lives get in the way of someone who might just come to Christ if we were genuinely godly.