1 Timothy 3:16 tells us, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." It sounds like Paul is telling us that we can find true godliness in the mystery of Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah. How then can we be godly people practicing godliness in our lives? The answer is to be like Yeshua/God. Unlike holiness, which is a lifestyle set-apart for God, godliness has a lot to do with our character—who we are and how we act. **Romans 5:3-4** says this about character: "But we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope." How we act in our faith is just as important as what we believe about our faith. If suffering produces endurance and endurance character, then we see how important it is for us to suffer. **Hebrews 5:8**, speaking about Messiah, says this in the Aramaic Bible: "And although He is the Son, He learned obedience by the fear and the suffering which He endured." Paul tells the Phillipians, "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." So if godliness has to do with our character and character is produced by our sufferings, we see that our sufferings and endurance also produce obedience to God, and obedience to God leads to a covenant knowledge of who God is. This is what Paul was referring to in **Philippians 1:29**, that that knowledge leads us to have participation in Messiah's sufferings: "For to you it has been granted for Messiah's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake." **2 Corinthians 4:17** tells us, "For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison." We also see that when we do suffer and endure it, it pleases God, which we see here in **1 Peter 2:20**: "For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God."

1 Peter 4:19 also tells us, "Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right." **Romans 5** tells us that our suffering leads to endurance and that endurance leads to character. Paul speaks about this to the Corinthians in **2 Corinthians 6:4-10**: "Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything." We see very clearly that when we endure suffering and hardships and various trials that this gives us great character and godliness. Paul calls our life of godliness a race to be won in **Hebrews 12:1-2**: "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." **James 1:2-4** tells us, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." We have seen several things that constitute godly character in the believer. But Scripture tells us even more about our character. **Hebrews 13:5** tells us this, "Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, 'I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you.'"

If our example is Yeshua, then let's see what His advice is to His followers in **Matthew 19:21-24**. "Yeshua answered, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me.' When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.'" **1 Timothy 6:6** tells us, "But godliness with contentment is great gain." When we are satisfied with what we have and where we are in life we are virtually saying, "God has been faithful to me." That is why God has put such importance on being thankful. In **1 Thessalonians 5:18** Paul tells us, "Give thanks in everything, for this is the will of God in Yeshua the Messiah among you." Being thankful in all things keeps us humble and contrite, for God hates pride, and this is what happens to us when we are not thankful. **Romans 1:21** tells us the result of not being thankful: "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." We are to be eternally grateful to God for Yeshua and His shed blood, our eternal sacrifice. God has already showed us His great love; anything else is His grace and mercy, no matter what may come our way, good or bad. But when our character reflects godliness it tells us that no matter what comes our way we can rejoice knowing that God will never leave us or forsake us. **Philippians 4:4-7** says this: "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Messiah Yeshua." This is endurance in the time of suffering that gives us godly character.

This godly character allows us to still obey God by trusting in His character, knowing His great love was demonstrated to us through Yeshua, and because of this we can have contentment, peace of mind, and still give thanks to God in all things. **1 Corinthians 15:57-58** tells us, "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast and immovable. Always excel in the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." We know that Paul tells the Romans that our lives are to be an acceptable sacrifice of service unto God. A person with godly character is a person who has given God His life in service for the kingdom. He has laid down his life as a sacrifice unto God. We too give our lives for our brethren as Messiah laid down His life for us. Humility is what gives us a heart for others. We ought to think of others first as **Philippians 2:3** tells us: "In whatever you do, don't let selfishness or pride be your guide. Be humble, and honor others more than yourselves." We must have a servant's heart if we are to be godly people. Yeshua washed His disciples' feet and told us to do the same as we read in **John 13:14-17**, "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." A life of service to God is one that requires us to lay down our lives for others. It requires us to die to ourselves. It is one of obedience to God. **Matthew 16:24-26** says, "Then Jesus told His disciples, 'If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?'"

When we receive Yeshua, we accept His yoke upon us, as **Matthew 11:29-30** tells us, "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." When we accept Yeshua as our Lord and Savior, we become a servant, or better yet, a slave to our Master Yeshua. We flee from the trappings of this world and we cling to God. Our home is not this present world, but our Father, our Creator: He becomes our eternal home. We leave darkness for Light. We leave behind our wicked ways for godliness. **1 Timothy 6:11-12** says this: "But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses." The mystery of godliness is found in the person of Yeshua the Messiah, and when we follow His example, imitating Him in our lives, we become more and more like Him. We have looked at suffering that produces endurance and endurance that produces character, and now we want to end by looking at character that produces hope. **Romans 5:5** says this about hope: "And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us." Our hope is in the Lord Yeshua who demonstrated His great love for us, so that we too may demonstrate His love through us by our godly character. For Paul tells us in **1 Timothy 4:10**, "For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers." Hope never disappoints, so let us endure as we run the race keeping our eyes fixed on the Author and Finisher of our faith, Yeshua our Messiah, the mystery of godliness revealed in our hearts.

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