

Power of True Religion: Power Over Us

by J. Glyn Owen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having the power of true religion, which is the authority of God over our lives, and the need for surrender to God's will in order to experience His power in our lives.

Duration: 55:24

Scripture: Isaiah 1:11-13, Acts 8:29, Acts 15:28, Acts 16:7, Hebrews 12:5

Topics: "True Religion"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of true religion and the power it holds. He discusses the three ways in which the power of true religion manifests itself: the power of God over us, the power of God in us, and the power of God through us. The speaker urges believers to not only believe in God but to also experience the power of God in their lives and exemplify it to the world. He encourages listeners to remove anything in their lives that hinders the expression of God's power in salvation.

Transcript

Amen, and may the Lord in his goodness hear our prayers. It seems such a long time ago that I felt constrained on a Sunday evening, though it's only about four weeks if I remember correctly, to turn to 2 Timothy, chapter 3, and to look at the statement there in verse 5, where the Apostle Paul refers to people who have a form of godliness, or a form of piety, or religion, that is the word, but denying the power of it. Having a form of religion, a form of godliness, but denying the power of it.

And I want to return to that tonight. This word of Paul's, first of all, tells us that religion has two sides, and this is really what we dwelt at last time. Religion has two sides.

It has form. It takes a certain pattern in our individual lives. And the sad thing is, of course, that our entire godliness, so-called, or religion, whatever term you choose to use, it can be confined to the mere shell, the mere externalities, the carcass, really, of true religion.

And it is all too possible for us to have the externalities impeccably in their place, without what the Apostle Paul is speaking of here as the power that should inhabit the form of the true religion. A very famous politician in England, before we came, before we left that part of the world, was a leader of the Socialist Party, and he had a remarkable tongue. I don't want to say too much about him, but he came from one of our Welsh mining valleys, and he referred to the churches of the valleys that he had come from as sheer extinct volcanoes.

And I think it was one of the most graphic turn of phrase that I've heard for a long time, because it was so true. Time was when in that very valley, and I'm referring now to something that happened, a man of God, the early part of this century, a man of God stood in an open street on a Lord's Day morning, because there was a procession, a parade. I don't need to tell you what it was about, it was something very worldly anyway.

But this man of God had felt constrained in the name of the Lord to forbid them to move. There were about 5,000 people coming down, it was very popular. And R.B. Jones stood alone in the center of the road, and the crowd stopped.

And he stood on an orange box, and with his two hands, he lifted up his hands into the sky, and he said, Men and women, in the name of the Lord God Almighty, I forbid you to do what you have planned to do. Go home. And the whole lot of them, men and women, boys and girls, turned heel and went home.

There were no tricks about that. He just happened to be a man who had something more than the form of true religion. Time was when what we speak of as non-conformity, particularly in the British Isles, had not only a voice, but authority.

And what was preached in the churches on Sunday had some influence upon what happened in the House of Commons on Monday. It doesn't appertain anymore, but neither does it here. Where has the power gone? In North America, there is more evangelism than in any other part of the world.

And if we rightly are judged, there are more people in North America from week to week who are making a profession of faith in Jesus Christ than anywhere else. But where is the power? They will go to church on Sunday, I take it. Some of them may find their schedule a little too busy for that, unfortunately.

But they will bear the name of Jesus, and they will talk about Him, and they will say that they believe in Him, and they call themselves believers. And they will be baptized, and they will be received into a church, probably. But where is the power? And part of the challenge here is this, of course, that the Apostle Paul here says that as the age of grace is pressing towards its close, this kind of awesome phenomenon will be on the increase.

And you'll find it on all hands. Men and women who have the form of godliness, externally you can't find fault with them. They're in the right place.

They're using the right words. They apparently, they ostensibly believe the right things. But they're like extinct volcanoes.

If ever, if ever, if ever, they rarely knew the mighty, explosive power of God in their hearts. Now that is tragic for many reasons. It leads, for example, to a misrepresentation of God.

And I would put this before anything else tonight. The tragedy of the fact that men and women, whether here or elsewhere, have a form of godliness without the power of it. The main tragedy lies in this, that it misrepresents God.

We appear to be saying, you see, that the only thing that is necessary in true religion is to be in the right place at the right time, to say the right things, and so forth. Mouth the correct shibboleths, but we are utterly impotent. That's not what God's after.

That's not why Christ died. That's not why the Holy Spirit came. That's not why the Bible was written.

The Bible wants more than that. The Spirit wants more than that. Jesus wants more than that.

And He's died and is risen again and ascended to procure infinitely more than that. To be draped in the mere trappings of religion is a mockery that sooner or later disgusts mankind around us. And they conclude that God does nothing more to give and nothing more to say than what they see in men who have a form of godliness and deny the power of it.

And to me, this is the greatest tragedy. If they judge Christianity according to what they see in us, when we have no power, our primary iniquity, and what should be our primary concern is this, that we are misrepresenting the Lord God Almighty. However hard and well we sing, the Lord is King.

Again, of course, the same phenomenon stays in the hand of divine blessing. You read the book of Isaiah, and he is a particular exponent of this doctrine from the very first chapter to right on to the end of the fifties there. The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor is his ear heavy that he cannot hear.

Well then, why doesn't he hear? We're praying, aren't we? We're talking to him, aren't we? We're asking for things, aren't we? And we're very religious. We're bringing our offerings. We're coming to church.

We're remembering the Sabbaths and the full moons and the festivals. We're keeping them all. You read chapter one.

But says the Lord, the multitude of your sacrifices, what are they to me? I have more than enough of burnt offerings and of rams and of the fat of fatted animals. I've no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to meet with me, who has asked this of you? You're trampling my very courts.

Stop bringing meaningless offerings. I don't need to go on. What he's saying is this.

It's all in vain. I'm not listening to you. I'm turning my face the other way.

I'm not interested in it, says the Lord. It dishonors God before men. It results in the withholding of the mighty hand of God in blessing.

We are living at a time in church history then when the forces of evil are so blatant that we simply cannot afford to be living on the shell or on the crust of the truth, of true religion. Brothers and sisters, you and I need the power. You and I need the dynamis.

You know, I was coming down here on Friday night for a meeting. I was coming down one of these side streets here to come up St. George's and I couldn't come out. There was such a crowd coming up on the road I didn't know what they were.

The road was black with people. So I turned back. I'm afraid I broke the law.

Don't tell anyone, will you? But I turned round and I made a U-turn and I thought I'd be in front of them and I came down Bloor and then I came down Spadina here and lo and behold by the time I got to the lights in Spadina they were there. And I discovered afterwards that they were about a mile long and they were from one side of the road to the other. So I had to leave my car.

I found a spot to park it there and I walked down and I looked at their faces and I sensed the mighty power of hell on the march. What's the answer to it? Marching against them? Not on your life. Petitioning the Parliament? God only knows whether that'll do any good.

But I'll tell you what the answer really is. It's right here. It is right here.

It is for God's men and women to discover the power of true religion and be so possessed by it that they become vehicles of it. And there is nothing else that will turn the tide. I personally am convinced of that.

I see some staunch Wesleyans here tonight and they remind me of the fact that Wesley's revival in England Wesley's ministry in England saved England from the awesome things that were going on in the continent at that very time. A man of God, clothed with the power of God allied to men and women of God who knew how to pray and how to speak and how to live. That's the answer.

It's God's answer. You are the salt of the earth. Now then, what have we got here? Well, it's a truism, is it not? That Christianity is a religion of power.

If it's not that, then historically the faith is nothing. It is a religion of power. Our Lord Jesus Christ stood face to face with the Pharisees of old and the Sadducees and he criticized them.

Why did he criticize them? On two counts. One, he says, you are in error because you do not know the Scriptures. That's one thing.

They thought they had a spattering of the Old Testament a smattering of the Old Testament but they were never right or very rarely right. Scholars though they were, they misrepresented the Old Testament as they did in the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount reflects their misunderstanding of the truth.

But Jesus didn't end there. He said, you are in error, he says, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God. You're so meticulous, you're so dogmatic, you're so sure of yourself but listen, he says, you're all wrong.

And it's because you don't know the Scriptures of God and you don't know the power of God. If you only knew God you'd have power in your lives. Paul claimed that the good news of our Christian faith is essentially God's power expressed and experienced.

It is the power of God unto salvation to every man that believes to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. It's the power of God unto salvation working out salvation involved in saving men and women power at work not power in a cage not power in a cartridge but power let loose. Brothers and sisters, that's what the Gospel is.

It's the power of God let loose moving up and down the pews touching our hearts, our minds, our consciences our very bodies. It's the power of God on the go. It's the go in the name of God.

That's what power is. You can't confine the power of God. It's an explosive thing, it's on the moon.

The message of the cross says Paul is foolishness to those who are perishing maybe but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. And so what I want to say tonight is this it's an indispensable ingredient of true religion. Now it's not something for extra for those who are prepared to go that way it's indispensable.

My friend, don't be satisfied with a shell. Imagine a couple here I heard of a couple falling in love this week these are great weeks, you know you never know what a pastor hears but imagine this man buying a ring for his or assuming to be purchasing a ring for his beloved he goes to her with nothing but a case there is no ring inside you know, just a case. How crazy! Brothers and sisters, you know it's so true of us so often we've got nothing but the case but the casing we just don't have the ring we just don't have the jewel we just don't have the power and we've got so accustomed to it we think it's all right just as we are and it's all wrong.

Now this is the theme this is the thing that gripped me when I read this verse about four weeks ago and I want to talk about the power of true religion I want to start tonight and I'm going to continue for another two Sunday evenings it seems to me that I'm looking generally at the New Testament now we're usually confined to a particular text or passage I want to look more generally tonight it seems to me that the power of true religion the power of the gospel it manifests itself in three ways first of all, it's the power of God over us it's the authority of God over us so that He is Lord, my Lord and my God secondly, it is the power of God in us right inside dealing with a man that lives in this carcass dealing with a person that lives in this body dealing with a person inside and it's the power of God doing something on the move, inside men and women and thirdly, it is the power of God through men and women now, really, you can't divide these three because they're like the three coils of a rope they belong to one another they've been entwined around one another and they make one you can't really split them up nevertheless, I think we're going to try to do that just for the sake of being clear concerning the biblical teaching tonight but let's remember that in experience we simply cannot divide them as sure as the power of God is over you and His authority is acknowledged by you then He will be working in you and as sure as He will be working in you He will work through you and so they come together but for the sake of our analysis for the sake of our seeing things clearly we are going to try to see them separately tonight looking only, of course, at the first the power of God over us in vain do we look for the powerful ministry of God in us or through us unless He, first of all, has power over us now let me ask you, right at this stage in our service will you do this quietly with yourself? try to think how much power does the Lord exercise over you? no one else can answer that what authority has He got over your life and mine? how far does it go? in the teaching of the New Testament Jesus Christ is, first of all, said to be Lord of the Church Lord of the Church the Head of the Church the Lord, the Master but because He is Head of the Church Colossians chapter 1 and verse 18 we read in Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 22 now listen to this, it's so beautiful that He is Head over all things for the Church's sake I don't want anyone to miss that but I want you to notice which comes first what does it mean when it says that He is Head over all things for the Church's sake He is Head of their enemies He is Master of their friends He is the Boss, He is the Lord of everything is there anything the Church needs?

He can give it anything? anything He is Lord of all things to the Church the Church can need nothing but that He is Lord over it and can provide it ah, but wait a moment before He is Lord over anything to the Church He must be Lord of the Church and you see there is a great dichotomy in experience the experience of many of us between these two things we want the Lord to be Lord over all things for us and to us but the shoe pinches when He says first of all I have to have authority over you there can be no salvation for the sinner that does not involve the exercise of power over that sinner authority over that sinner now you look at all the biblical metaphors or images, start in the Old Testament if you like if the sheep is to be saved by the shepherd then the shepherd must be the master he must have authority over the sheep a sheep can't be saved a sheep can't enjoy pasture a sheep is never safe unless the sheep obeys and is under the control of the shepherd that's a truism think of the potter and the clay there is no way that the vessel unto honor can emerge unless the clay is soft and malleable and yielding to the

potter's deft hands the potter must have power, authority over the clay move into the New Testament we have the image of the rabbi's authority over his disciples a disciple never becomes what the rabbi is capable of making him unless the disciple receives and imbibes and obeys the teaching or come again the physician and the patient the same is true no patient will be healed just because he's on the list of a physician or she's on the list of a physician you've got to go to the physician or he's got to come to you and he'll tell you what to do and what to take and then you've got to take it I am tempted to go straight and I will tell you this you know the first time this came home to me was in Belfast Belfast people are a very special breed but I remember going to see a lady in the heart of the Falls Road where the trouble started she was not a Presbyterian, she was not a Baptist she was not an Anglican she was a kind of Catholic that she was looking for something that she'd not got I won't tell you all the story but this is the relevant part of it I don't even remember her name just now but she came back to me very forcibly this afternoon there was something wrong with her, I don't know what it was but there she was lying on her couch as I was visiting her on this particular day and she was so proud of the fact that there was nothing seriously wrong because she was in the doctor's care I visited him so many times and he's visited me so many times so everything's all right well I said, did he give you anything to take?

Oh yes, each time he comes he brings me some tablets or he gives me a bottle and whenever I go to him he gives me tablets or he gives me a bottle I said, do you take them?

Oh no, she said, oh no and she opened the cupboard and there was a whole canister all bottles of whatever, I don't know but you see she was in touch with the doctor and she was expecting to get well but she hadn't taken well I mustn't say she hadn't taken a tablet, I don't know but certainly most of them were untouched now you may say that's very queer and far-fetched but it's true my friend, if the physician is to heal he must be mastered you must obey assuming that he is a true physician he's mastered and he cannot heal you even if he has the power to do so otherwise unless you obey, take what he gives you or the image of the father's authority over the children over his children or the image of the king's rule over his subjects it's all the same you know you can't go anywhere in the

New Testament without this image, this metaphor standing out and saying look here in your relationship to God he must have control over you power, authority neither is this claim to power and authority over men exclusively a biblical phenomenon of course in every religion it is claimed the meaning of the word Islam comes from the Aramaic and it means surrender and the follower of Islam will tell you that there is no salvation unless you surrender to the will of Allah you have a similar kind of thing in Buddhism or when you turn to the cults you meet the same thing think of the Mormons, the authority, the authority over them think of these young men offering two years in the prime of life, two years to be a missionary and not to go where they want to go where the climate's good but where

they're told to go and go they do never mind about your career, never mind about anything else you go and go by the thousands they do authority who has not been faced with the Jehovah's Witness at the door you can't stop them they come and they go and they come and they go and they come back again and they come back again and they're full of zeal hawking a lie which is an insult to Jesus Christ the Son of God but they come back again they're under authority you see and you're not trying to escape it now there are two sides or two aspects to the power that biblical religion claims over the people of God first, the Bible claims that God has a moral right to rule us and this is established I'm not going to dwell upon it, just want to refer to it this is basic and it is established on many

counts God has the right of the creator over his creature God has the right of the preserver over his preserved your next breath is God's he has the right over your life not only because he made you but because he preserves you you can't breathe your next breath my friend unless God gives you breath but not only that of course in the experience of his redeemed he has redeemed us with the blood of his Son and as the apostle Paul haunted the rebellious Corinthians of old he would tell us you have been redeemed you have been bought with a price you don't belong to yourselves God has the right to rule you and to rule me as his creature but especially as his redeemed now beyond that the Bible affirms that where genuine piety obtains that divine right is acknowledged this is what makes a true

believer a man comes under the authority of God and submits himself now time was you know in the history of the church in certain parts of the world where this was the language of evangelism surrender I used to think in my young Christian days that that wasn't a good word surrender I'm just trying to analyze my own psychology now I'm not quite sure whether I'm doing justice to myself or not but I won't tell you the conclusion however as I read my Bible I find that there was a very significant truth to that whether it was the whole truth or not there cannot be faith in a Christ to whom I don't yield surrender this divine power is exercised over us on many fronts the gospel comes to us as the power of divinely revealed and inspired truth over our minds and God asks us to submit our minds to

his truth the gospel comes to us as the power of the divinely ordained standard of right and wrong and he asks us to submit our consciences to his standard the Bible comes to us and the gospel and it claims to be the power of God's will telling us what we must do we must submit our wills to him you see all this is God coming into our lives to claim authority over us and to tell us you don't belong to yourselves to be saved you must be in my hand in my control but now let me try to put this in another way I shall do so as briefly as I can another way of presenting this same important truth is to stress the role of each person of the blessed trinity in the exercise of power over men who have the spirit of true religion and have you noticed how the Bible does this how the New Testament does

this I don't need to go back into the old the New Testament speaks or refers to the power of God the Father over his people of the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God the Savior of men over his people and of the power and authority of the Spirit the whole triune God you see comes to save us first of all by exercising authority over us power over us let me just dwell with this for a little while first of all there is the distinctive role of the Father which is expressed in a number of passages now let me give us an illustration tonight the passage very well known passage very familiar passage in Hebrews 12 it starts with verse 5 as the Holy Father God is concerned for the real and eternal well-being of his children and that is expressed in this passage in Hebrews 12 in terms

of what is called there according to the King James chastening whom the Father loves he chastens and he scourges every son every child that he receives in the New International Version it is training the word training and literally the Greek word underlying it really means that it's the training of a child I quote from one of the best Greek English lexicons the aunt Gingrich and it refers to the word and says it means the upbringing the training instruction of a child chiefly as it is obtained by discipline and correction and inspiration as that of a fatherly God what is this that we're referring to?

God the Father taking each child whom he receives into his family and exercising such authority over each child that he never receives a child into his family never adopts a child into his family but that he corrects him he chastises him he disciplines him he trains him and in the midst of all that that is said there there is the word *gumnadzo* from which we have our English gymnastics God puts us through our paces says the

writer to the Hebrews he puts us in the gymnasium and he puts us through our exercises because he wants us to grow up into the fullness of the stature of Christ he wants to make men and women of God out of us but you see to do that he exercises power authority my friend do you dance to God's tune? to whose band do you march? how do you march through life? do you keep

time with God? true religion means the acknowledgement and the glad acceptance of the fact that God the Father rules over his people and trains them by his grace and by his providence you have illustrations of the same thing going back into the Old Testament and into the New from beginning to end of scripture in the Old Testament there are classical illustrations such as Joseph imagine Joseph for example after being sold by his brothers to those Ishmaelites or Egyptians as they thought of them remember after everything that had happened to him he says when he met his brothers later on he said ah he said it's not as you think it was God who sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance so then he says it was not you who sent me

here you see they were getting very sorry for themselves not perhaps penitent but they were sorry for themselves and a little bit afraid of consequences and he disabuses them he says alright it's alright now he says I'm not going to take vengeance on you it was God I see the hand of God in it God sent me ahead of you you see God was training me he put me in the pit he took me into the caravan he allowed me to be faced with the temptation in Potiphar's house he took me into prison and when that man forgot me the chief butler when he went out and asked no favor as he had said he would God was in it he says and in all of this God was making me what was he making you Joseph? he made me he was making me a father to Pharaoh Lord of his entire household and ruler over all Egypt God was making me

you see he was disciplining me he was training me I was in the gymnasium says Joseph oh blessed is that man that sees behind the hands of men the hand of God blessed is that man who can see the sovereign hand of God behind the kind or cruel hands of men and who can say to every circumstance what Jesus said to Pontius Pilate in John 19 11 what did Jesus say to Pontius Pilate? you would have no power over me if it were not given you from above you got it? says Jesus to Pontius Pilate yes you got authority over me for the moment but you didn't get it it's not yours it's not the Roman power it's not the Jewish power and it's not yours personally it's been given you from above and because of that I submit to it I yield to it I give in I acknowledge the authority of God over me even to the

point of my being a counted a sinner and a worm and no man and I die beneath it yes and thrice blessed is he who has grace calmly and confidently to yield to that sovereign and wise rule of God over him I remember referring to this once before if you remember it forgive me probably you don't anyway I remember referring to a man who meant a lot to me Johannes Towler of Strasbourg he met a tramp one day whom he addressed in this way God give you a good day my friend he said to the tramp do you speak to tramps? you might find great profit in speaking to some of them there are great angels dressed in rags I found that I thank God said the beggar I never had a bad day thank you what?

Towler somewhat taken aback changed his mode of salutation God give you a happy life my friend I thank God said the beggar I'm never unhappy never unhappy said Towler what do you mean? well rejoined the beggar when it is fine I thank my God when it rains I thank my God when I have plenty I thank God when I am hungry I thank God and since God's will is my will and whatsoever pleases my God pleases me why should I say I am unhappy when I am not unhappy oh there's music in that there's grace in that you see he saw himself in the hands of God for better for worse for richer for poorer alone or in company in all circumstances in the hand of God the Father who he saw disciplining him making something of him a child

who would honor his father in the household of heaven scripture sometimes

speaks of the authority of the Son of God over us it speaks of Jesus as Lord I'm not going to dwell on this this is a more familiar theme can I only just refer to it it is important Jesus manifested in his human life what it means to be obedient to the Father because he was the perfect son and three times over God the Father said of him as Jesus the man this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased if you want to see then if you want to see what kind of submission honors the Father and pleases him look at the Lord Jesus Christ he is the pattern that he exhibited all of this in his life in his death and not only that he by his sacrifice upon the cross established forever the crown rights of God the Redeemer over every man and every woman who trusts him God has creative rights from all

eternity but he has sovereign rights the rights of Calvary redemptive rights over his own the Thessalonians knew that you know when they listened to Paul bringing the good news to Thessalonica they got a little bit angry after a while and do you remember how they represented Paul and his message and his friends who were with him this is how they said Acts 17 7 they are all defying Caesar's decrees they said saying that there is another king one called Jesus you got that they've been listening to Paul preaching and this is how they summarize it this man and the fellows with him are talking about another king it's a threat to Caesar who is this other king Jesus is king you see the whole of the ministry of the Apostle Paul asked you to be subject to King Jesus are you subject to him? how far

does he have authority over us? and then of course the New Testament speaks of the authority of the Holy Spirit the power of the Holy Spirit I only want to say two things about it it's not that it isn't important it's absolutely important and I don't want to take too long two things I want to say are these what is meant by the fullness of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament is essentially in the first place there are other things but in the first place when the New Testament speaks of the fullness of the Holy Spirit it means the control of the Spirit whom the Holy Spirit fills he controls you know it is possible to have an element indwelling you that doesn't control you when the Holy Spirit fills he takes over all control and in this age this is how God's authority is expressed it is by

the Spirit and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God the other thing I want to say is this you notice how the language of the book of the Acts of the Apostles how this authority over the Spirit over people is expressed it comes out in odd little snippets you're not looking for it but it's there all the time I read for example I could read more evident Scriptures Scriptures in which it's far more evident than this but there are incidents like this we miss them if we don't read prayerfully in Acts chapter 15 and verse 28 we read it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us now can you see that? there's been a council in Jerusalem and they had to come to some conclusions in that council and one of the leaders says how did we come to the conclusions? well he said it seemed good to

the Holy Spirit and to us and we sensed the lordship of the Spirit and the movings of the Spirit and the thoughts of the Spirit and the will of the Spirit and he influenced us likewise and we came to think the same thoughts no earthquakes! just there we have earthquakes in the book of the Acts sometimes of course and the houses tremble but not always God does not always manifest His power in earthquakes my friend have you seen the snow moving these last two days? did you hear it go? did you hear it move? well I know the lorries came into some of our streets but I'm not talking about the lorries I'm talking about the warm breeze that came up our streets and silently overnight and a little bit of rain just a little sprinkling sorry you Baptists but it was only a little bit of sprinkling and

it did the trick and God the almighty the omnipotent God can exert His power without making any noise don't judge God's presence by the noise necessarily He's almighty it seems good to the Holy Spirit and to us now listen to this then the Spirit told Philip go to that chariot and stay near it you see here is Philip in the wilderness well first of all he wasn't in the wilderness he was in the revival up in Samaria the Spirit told him to come down into the wilderness but now that he's in the wilderness the Spirit tells him listen go near to that chariot and keep near it and the man was under the control of the Spirit he didn't know why but he knew in his soul that he was there for that purpose and the Spirit controlled him or let me give you another one we read of Paul and his partners in

Acts chapter 16 and verse 7 they tried to enter Bithynia but we read the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them here is Paul moving west towards Europe you see and he's moving as it were in a straight line first of all he tries to go down to Ephesus but the Spirit of the Lord wouldn't allow them to go there then they tried to go up north towards Bithynia as my text says but the Spirit of the Lord wouldn't let them go north either but the point I'm getting at is this you see the Spirit was powerful there they knew the Spirit they were sensitive to the Spirit the Spirit was exercising power they had no liberty so what do they do? either turn back or go forward forward they go until they come to Thracia and then Paul has the vision in the night come over and help us the man of Macedonia and

so the Gospel came to Europe the Spirit knew what he was after but he's exercising control to bring his servants to their rightful place you see his power not making a lot of noise there was noise on the day of Pentecost and there may still be noise I think we could do with a little bit more noise but, but, but that's not the important thing it's the control it's the power of the Spirit power brothers and sisters I'm concluding we, you and I have the form of piety we go to church on Sundays sometimes during the week we're out on a Sunday night many people are not here you are you and I we've gone through the form of service have we the power that corresponds to the outward form have we the power there can be no greater tragedy it seems to me than that of a people believing in an

almighty Father calling themselves his children yet unwilling to be ruled by him believing in an almighty Savior who is the only Savior of the lost and yet unwilling to be mastered by him in order to be served by him believing in an almighty Holy Spirit who can bring the things of God into the lives of men and capture men for Christ and bring to new birth a whole universe of sinners and yet are content with anything less and I go one further step who profess to believe in an infallible word of Scripture and yet are unwilling to offer to the deity of whom the Scriptures speak Father, Son, and Holy Spirit the yieldedness of heart and will that is the essential hallmark of a redeemed people it is possible to have the form of godliness and to deny the power thereof to resist even to deny the

Holy Spirit or stand against him and to grieve him so that we are left with the contradictory phenomenon of a professing Christian who is lord over himself and you will never find in the Bible a greater contradiction than that and if you look into heaven you will not see this person in heaven a man or a woman who is lord over himself or herself for the basic Christian confession involves Jesus Christ is Lord May the grace of God come into our churches in these days and into our hearts bringing home to us the urgency of the hour not just to believe the truth but having believed the truth to experience what it speaks of so that we may exemplify before an unbelieving world the power of God expressed in salvation if there is anything in your life that stands in the way of that tonight brother

or sister count it but loss I plead you to get rid of it don't harbor it don't hold on to it don't come to terms to it the dearest idol you have known whatever that idol be tear it from the throne it occupies and crown him

only Lord of all he must be Lord over us before he exercises his power in us and through us let us pray almighty God our father in heaven we bless you for your wondrous word and your glorious gospel and your infinite patience with us who bear your name forgive our sins of word and deed and thought we pray and write your word upon our hearts anew tonight as it were with the finger of the Holy Spirit himself Spirit of God communicate with us those things you want us to know and to experience and enable us not to resist not a kick against the prick enable us when we know

that it is you to open wide the gates of our hearts that the whole being may be mastered possessed and in turn empowered by the God of all power and the God of all grace we ask it in Jesus Christ your son our Lord Amen

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