

# The Power and the Form

by J.C. Philpot

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between godliness and the power of godliness, and warns against the peril of the last days when many have the form of godliness without the reality.*

**Scripture:** Acts 20:21, 1 Corinthians 5:10, 1 Corinthians 16:22, Ephesians 2:8, 2 Timothy 3:5, 1 John 3:14

**Topics:** "False Profession", "True Godliness"

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## Description

J.C. Philpot preaches on the danger of having a form of godliness without the power thereof, as described in 2 Timothy 3:5. He explains that the last days are perilous because many will outwardly profess godliness but lack the inward transformation by the Spirit. Philpot breaks down the concepts of godliness, the power of godliness, the form of godliness, denying the power, and the exhortation to turn away from those who deny the power of godliness.

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## Transcript

Preached at Providence Chapel, London, on August 30, 1846, by J. C. Philpot

"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof - from such turn away." 2 Timothy 3:5

Writing to his beloved son, Timothy, Paul in this Epistle tells him that "in the last days perilous times shall come." But why should "the last days" be so particularly "perilous?" He says, "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy," and so on. But were men not always thus? Was there ever a time known when men were not "lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers?" The root of these evils is so deeply seated in fallen man that these fruits must and do continually appear.

Why, then, should the apostle point out "the last days" as so particularly "perilous," when men always were as he describes them here? The reason is, "Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof." It was that which made the last days "perilous;" because men would no longer be such as he describes them in this black catalogue openly and profanely as before, but would be covered over by the mask of profession. It was that which made them perilous, that is, dangerous to the people of God, lest they should be ensnared and deceived thereby.

I shall, with God's blessing, for the sake of communicating my thoughts and feelings on these words more clearly and intelligibly, adopt five leading divisions of the subject.

God alone, I well know, can give the blessing. I shall endeavor to show-

I. What godliness is.

II. What the power of godliness is.

III. What the form is.

IV. What it is to deny the Power.

V. The exhortation, "from such turn away."

I. What godliness is. Godliness in the Scriptures of the New Testament seems to have two distinct meanings. Sometimes it means the whole work of grace upon the heart; all that makes and manifests a man to be a child of God; in a word, that which we call 'experimental religion,' with all the fruits accompanying it. For instance, "godliness with contentment is great gain" 1Ti 6:6. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" 1Ti 4:8. "Exercise yourself rather unto godliness" 1Ti 4:7. "According as his divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" 2Pe 1:3. "Yes, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution" 2Ti 3:12.

But there are other passages in which the word godliness seems to have a more limited meaning. For instance, where the apostle exhorts Timothy to pursue after certain Christian graces - "Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness" 1Ti 6:11; there godliness does not signify the whole of the experimental religion, but one particular branch of it, namely, devotedness of heart to the Lord. So also we find the Apostle Peter saying, "Giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness" 2Pe 1:5-7. Godliness is here spoken of as a distinct fruit of the Spirit's work upon the heart. Used in this sense, I understand it to signify, that devotedness of heart to the Lord which is the effect of divine teaching in the soul.

It may be asked, then, "In what sense do you understand the term godliness in the text?" I answer, that by it I understand the whole of the Spirit's work upon the soul, the teachings of God in the heart, all that is generally conveyed by the expression, experimental religion, with all the fruits and consequences which flow out of that divine work. Thus godliness in this sense has a very comprehensive signification. It embraces the whole of experimental religion; it includes the whole work of grace from first to last, from the first teachings of the Spirit in the heart of the babe, up to the last hallelujahs of the expiring saint. And not only so, but it comprehends all the external fruits and manifestations of the work of grace upon the soul. Thus, in this sense, godliness has a very extensive signification; and therefore many spiritual branches will be found to grow out from this deep and broad stem.

1. "Godliness," therefore, will comprehend in the first place, that divine work, which is called in the Scriptures repentance. What were the chief features of Paul's ministry? He tells us, he preached "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" Acts 20:21. These were the two leading points that he dwelt upon. Wherever, then, there is godliness in a man's heart, in other words, wherever there is a work of grace in the soul, there must be repentance.

What is repentance? The conviction of sin produced by the operation of the Spirit upon the conscience, piercing and penetrating the soul with the guilt of transgression, and creating self-loathing and

self-abhorrence on account of the manifested evils of our hearts, lips, and lives. Honest confessions of our sins at the footstool of mercy; a broken heart and a contrite spirit; a truly penitent soul, melted, dissolved, and laid low in tears of godly sorrow at the feet of Christ, will ever accompany that repentance unto life which is the gift of Jesus.

2. Again - if "godliness" comprehends the whole work of grace upon the heart, it must also include faith in Christ. Whence springs faith in Christ? It is the gift of God; as we read, "For by grace are you saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast" Eph 2:8,9. But when do we begin to believe in Christ? When is there first any real faith in our heart towards his precious name? When there is some spiritual revelation of him to the soul; when there is some divine discovery of his Person, his blood, his righteousness, his love, his grace, his glory - when these are brought with a divine testimony by the Spirit's heavenly unction into the heart, then faith springs up. No sooner does Jesus show his lovely face and unfold himself to the soul, than faith springs up to receive, lay hold of, and embrace him, and brings him into the heart in his atoning blood, dying love, and justifying grace.

3. Love to the brethren is also another feature of "godliness." For by this "we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" 1Jo 3:14. If there be faith in Christ, there must be love to Christ; one cannot exist without the other. And if there be love to him who begat, there must be love to those that are begotten of him. If then we have seen Christ by the eye of faith, and that sight has drawn forth the affections of our heart towards him, we must love his image wherever seen; and love, pure love, must needs flow forth out of our heart towards that image, however outward circumstances may differ, or whatever there may be unpleasing or unlovely to the natural eye. We love Christ, though we see him beneath a beggar's rags. The features of Christ are ever lovely to those who know Christ, however defaced and degraded they may be in the eyes of the world; and we cannot but love them, wherever we see them visibly manifested in the heart and life of those who are his.

4. If "godliness" signify the Spirit's work upon the soul, it must also comprehend the spirit of prayer, which is a main branch of divine teaching. That worshiping, therefore, of God "in spirit and in truth," that flowing forth of desire in the bosom, that wrestling with him at the footstool of mercy, that pleading with him that he would be gracious, that longing, that languishing, that hungering, that thirsting, that breathing of the soul after his blessed presence and manifested power which spring from the secret operations of the Spirit upon the heart, all are a part of that "godliness" which is "profitable unto all things."

5. It must also comprehend the fear of the Lord, which is "the beginning of wisdom." For if "godliness" means the whole of the Spirit's work upon the heart, it will embrace the beginning, as well as the end; it will include in its capacious arms all the quickened family of God; and therefore it must needs comprehend the first teachings of the Spirit in raising up godly fear, in making the conscience alive and tender, in impressing upon the soul a godly reverence of Jehovah's holy name, and stamping upon the heart a sense of his dread perfections and dreadful majesty.

6. It will also comprehend all that springs out of the Spirit's work upon the soul; self-denial, mortification of sin, crucifixion of the flesh, separating from the world, deadness to the things of time and sense, a life of devotedness to the Son of God. It will further comprehend the fruits of the Spirit's work upon the heart, such as kindness, liberality to the brethren, an open heart and open hand; walking consistently and becomingly with our profession, avoiding the very appearance of evil; giving no room to the adversaries of Christ to bring a reproach upon the cause through us, but living as in the presence of the Lord, and with a

sense of his eye being continually upon us.

In a word, as "godliness" embraces the whole of the Spirit's work upon the heart, from his first teachings and quickenings until the soul finally departs in peace, with all the fruits and graces which flow out of it, it must needs be a most comprehensive expression.

II. What the POWER of godliness is. But, you will observe, the text speaks of the power of godliness. Godliness, and the power of it, then, are two distinct things. For instance, the Lord has in mercy quickened your soul, and made Christ precious to your heart; he has in mercy done that for you which will save you with an everlasting salvation. But are you always, are you often under the "power" of this godliness? Must we not confess, if we would speak honestly, that the seasons and occasions when the power is felt in our hearts are comparatively very rare? If God has indeed implanted the blessed Spirit in your hearts; if your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit; if Jesus dwells in you, and is formed in you "the hope of glory," you are never destitute of godliness. But you are often destitute of the "power of godliness." For instance-

1. Are you not often destitute of the power to repent, and confess your sin before God? Does not conscience often bring to view a melancholy retrospect of carnal thoughts, wicked desires, vain imaginations, foolish words, frivolous speeches, and all that catalogue of evils, that huge bill which godly fear sometimes files in the court within, as seen in all our departures from the life of God? But are you able to repent? are you able to feel cut to the very heart? are you able to mourn and sigh because conscience brings against you this long indictment? Can you always feel your soul melted down with sorrow on account of it? Are you always able to feel contrition because you are proud, worldly, covetous, everything that is evil, everything that is hateful in God's sight?

But then, there are times and seasons when the Lord is pleased to work upon the conscience, to move and stir the soul, to touch the heart with his gracious finger--then repentance and godly sorrow flow forth. It is with us as with the rock that Moses struck. There was water in the rock; but it required to be struck with the rod before the waters flowed out. So we may have the grace of repentance in our souls; but it requires the divine hand to strike the rock, to cause the waters of godly sorrow to gush forth.

2. So, with respect to faith in Jesus. If the Lord has ever blessed you and me with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we never cease to believe in him. But there is often an apparent suspension of that faith. And it needs the same almighty power which first created it to draw it forth into living act and exercise. He that possesses faith possesses "godliness;" but it is only as faith is drawn out to look to, and live upon the Lord Jesus Christ that we have the "power of godliness."

3. Again, if ever you have loved Jesus with a pure affection; if ever you have felt him near, dear, and precious to your soul, that love can never be lost out of your heart. It may lie dormant; it does lie dormant. It may not be sweetly felt in exercise; but there it is. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema" 1Co 16:22. You would be under this curse if the love of the Lord Jesus Christ were to die out of your hearts.

But this love is often sleeping. When the mother sometimes watches over the cradle, and looks upon her sleeping babe with unutterable affection, the infant knows not that the mother is watching its slumbers; but when it awakes, it is able to feel and return its mother's caresses. It is so with the soul sometimes when love in the heart is like a babe slumbering in the cradle. But the babe opens its eyes, and sees the mother smiling upon it, it returns the smiles, and stretches forth its arms to embrace the bending cheek. So, when we see the face of Jesus stooping to imprint a kiss of love, or drop some sweet word into the heart--there

is a flowing forth toward him of love and affection--this is the power of love to Christ.

4. Is it not so with love to the brethren? Are we not often cold and dead toward them, if not a great deal worse, even so as to feel enmity against them? No, perhaps when we have seen them coming down one street, we have turned round the corner of another, to avoid meeting them. Such is the aversion of our carnal mind at times to even the most highly favored of God's people. But let us be brought into their company; let conversation turn upon spiritual things; let them speak of the feelings of their soul; let them tell out a little of what they have known and felt of divine things; and let us have experienced a measure of the same, at once all coldness, iciness, reserve, suspicion, and enmity flow down like the mountains at the Lord's presence--and love, union, kindness, tenderness, and Christian sympathy are sweetly and blessedly experienced. This is the power of Christian love.

5. So it is with prayer. I know not how it is with you; but I know that real prayer is not at my command. I cannot, God forbid that I should, cease to bend no knee before the throne of the divine Majesty. But can I command spiritual and heavenly desires? Can I create feelings of longings and languishings after his manifested presence? Can I produce a mind fixed upon eternal things? Can I raise up hungering and thirsting after his manifested love? Can I command that faith in Jesus whereby alone I can boldly approach him? Can I give myself feeling access into the presence of the King of kings, and a sweet manifestation in my soul that he is hearing and answering me? Can I open a door of utterance to express my desires, or raise up a sure confidence that the Lord will fulfill them? I cannot.

But there are times and seasons when the Lord the Spirit is pleased to breathe upon the believer's heart. The grace of prayer is no more dead in his soul than the grace of repentance, or the grace of faith, or the grace of love. But lively goings forth, spiritual actings, and pourings out of the soul, often lie dormant in the saint's bosom. But when the Lord is pleased to give us a spirit of prayer; when he is pleased to overshadow us in some measure with his felt presence, and draw the desires of our souls after himself, then to pray is indeed a sweet enjoyment to the soul. And we pray, not because it is our duty, nor because it is our privilege; but because it freely flows forth into the bosom of a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God. This is the power of prayer.

6. So with respect to the different fruits by which "godliness" is always accompanied. I may go out of the world; I may separate myself from all outward evil; I may not be entangled with the pleasures and amusements which the children of men please their vain minds with; no more, I may do many things that seem to be the result and fruit of the Spirit's work upon my heart; and yet no divine power, whence alone they rightly spring, may have been communicated to my heart.

But when, on the other hand, by the power of God resting upon me, by applying some portion of his word, as "Come out, and be separate," I am enabled to come out of the world; when I am enabled to hate every sin by the workings of a tender conscience; when I am enabled to overcome temptations by the fear of God as a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death; when I am enabled thus by God's grace and teaching, and under the special operation of the Spirit of God upon my heart and conscience to walk as becomes the Christian, then I have the power of godliness.

Thus there is a distinction ever to be borne in mind between "godliness" and the "power of godliness." You that are born of God, who have the teachings of God in your soul, are never destitute of "godliness." If you were, you would be ungodly people. But you are often, very often, destitute of "the power of godliness," and of the sweet manifestations, blessed revivings, and precious discoveries of the Spirit.

III. What the FORM is. But there is also such a thing as the form. Here we come to the distinction between the people of God and mere empty professors, who have nothing of the life and teaching of God in their souls. You that are the people of God may often write bitter things against yourselves because you do not feel the power of godliness; but that does not prove you not to be godly people. If ever you have had repentance unto life; if ever you have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; if ever you have felt him precious to your soul; if ever you have loved the brethren with a pure heart fervently; if ever you have prayed out of a sincere and spiritually taught heart, you are godly people, though you may not often feel the power of the blessed operations and heavenly communications of the Spirit vitally and divinely within.

But then, there are those who have neither "godliness," nor "the power" of it. They have but the "form." And what is the form? Why, a form is an outside appearance, merely the pretense of the thing without the reality. And this is what makes the last days so "perilous"--that there should be such a wide profession; that there should be so many who come near the truth, and yet not be partakers of the truth; who approach so near the borders of godliness, who have never been brought over the line of vital godliness. It is because there are so many that have the form without the power, that renders the last days perilous times for God's people, lest they should be entangled in the same snare, and deceived by false pretensions.

If this be the case, then, this form of godliness must come very near to the genuine. It is not perilous to the child of God to see the Papist worshiping a crucifix; or to see the Puseyite, [A follower of Dr. Pusey, one of the founders of the "Oxford Movement", which was the forerunner of Anglo-Catholicism] with his two wax candles upon the altar. It is not perilous to the child of God to see thousands crowding into a Wesleyan meeting-house; nor perilous to see hundreds approving a motley mixture of freewill and free grace; nor perilous to hear a man preaching the doctrines of grace, and sneering at the felt experience of them. These various degrees of error and delusion are not dangerous to the people of God, because usually they are not deceived by them.

But when two things very nearly resemble each other, there lies the peril; lest the poison should be mistaken for the remedy. Thus peril lies in the wide-spread profession of experimental truth, for it is that alone which deserves the name of "godliness," lest in the wide profession of experimental truth we should deceive ourselves, or others should deceive us, by the form without the power.

It seems to me, that in this day we have a very wide spread of experimental truth. That much-read book that I see upon the table, and its wide extension in all directions, I mean the "Gospel Standard", carries with it a degree of peril lest by its wide diffusion it may raise up a numerous crop of professors who have all the form, and pretension of experimental godliness, yet know nothing of the inward power, teachings, and operations of the Spirit upon the heart. So I have observed of late years a raising up of little causes of experimental truth, and the opening of pulpits in many parts. I believe when I reach home I shall have occupied twenty-seven pulpits within these thirteen weeks. And this is perilous to the people of God lest they should be entangled by the wide-spread profession of experimental truth and the mere exterior of vital godliness, without the heart-felt possession of spiritual knowledge and enjoyment of it.

Not that I am speaking, God forbid, against the extension of experimental works; not that I am speaking, God forbid, against the opening of fresh places where experimental truth is preached. No, I rejoice at it, and would say with Moses, "The Lord God... make them a thousand times as many as they are, and bless them as he has promised" De 1:11. God works by these means. But there is a peril attending them, lest Satan should come in by this door to deceive many to their own downfall, and even entangle God's people

in a profession beyond what they know of the vital, experimental power.

But what is the "form?" A form is something that comes very near, and yet is not the thing itself. It is something like what painters call 'a lay figure;' and from which they draw when they have not a living subject to copy. The lay figure represents a man with all the limbs, sinews, and muscles; but life, breath, and motion are wanting. For instance:

1. There is the form of repentance. A person may profess to be very sorry for, and to have great conviction of sin, talk about a law-work, and guilt on account of his transgressions; and yet not have that life-giving power of the Spirit upon his soul producing real contrition and true repentance. It may be only the workings of natural conscience, and not that peculiar teaching of God the Spirit in the heart of a sinner whereby he is broken down into godly sorrow and deep penitence of heart before the Lord.

2. So with respect to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a natural faith in Christ as well as a spiritual faith. A man may have heard so much about Jesus Christ under ministers who extol him highly, speak of his Person, proclaim his blood, and dwell upon his justifying righteousness, that he may fancy he has faith in Christ, because he has heard so much of him with the outward ear; and yet be all the time without living, genuine faith. This special gift and work of God upon the soul may be still fatally lacking.

3. So with respect to love to the Lord Jesus Christ. There may be a natural love toward him. A man may have heard and read so much of his kindness to sinners, and such glowing descriptions of the beauty of his Person, that he may have fallen in love with him. Just as Roman Catholics have their crucifixes and paintings of Christ, and in admiring their crucifixes and adoring their paintings, feel the workings of fleshly love towards him whom they suppose to be there represented; so a man may have heard so much about the love of Christ, that he may have his fleshly affections roused up, and mistake them for that pure love which is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit.

4. So we may have something that draws us towards the Lord's people. We may feel that there is an amiableness about them; we may believe that they are the Lord's living family, and wish to be like them; to talk as they talk, and speak as they speak; and this we may mistake for love to the brethren; while all the time our heart may be completely destitute of that true love to the brethren, the fruit and effect of the Spirit's work upon the soul.

5. So with respect to the gift of prayer. It may seem to ourselves, and those who hear us, so simple, so fervent, so earnest, so humbly expressed, that surely it must be a spiritual prayer. And yet, we may often mistake a mere natural gift for that special grace of God whereby we are enabled to pour out our heart before him.

6. So we may be able by what we have felt under the convictions of natural conscience to live a life of separation from the world, to overcome sin when not very strong, to walk in the commandments and ordinances of God blameless; and yet be destitute of the vital power of the Spirit's teachings and operations, without which all these things are but as the convulsive twitchings of a dead body under the action of an electric battery. Like Herod, a man may do many things, and yet be absolutely devoid of the vital power of godliness brought into the heart by the Spirit of God.

IV. What it is to deny the Power. 'Well,' some may say, 'if this be the case, how may I know that I am not deceived altogether?' 'If a man may go so near, and yet not be a real character, what evidence have I,' says some poor tempted child of God, 'that I am not deceived?' Now what is said of these characters?

They deny the power. Have you done that?

But what is it to "deny the power?" The power may be denied in various ways.

1. It is denied by some publicly and openly. There are some preachers professing the doctrines of truth, who cut down all experience, and say, 'it is nothing but frames and feelings.' This is to deny the power of godliness. If we have no frames, if we have no feelings, I am very sure the Spirit of God has not made our bodies his temple. If we have never had frames of sweet meditation, a frame of living faith, a frame of divine love, a frame of spiritual-mindedness, a frame of heavenly affections, I am very sure the Spirit of God has never blessed our soul. Again, if I am without feelings--a feeling of sorrow for sin, a feeling of faith towards Jesus, a feeling of love towards his name, a feeling of love towards the brethren; if we are without these gracious feelings, we are dead as stones as to any possession of the life of God. So that, to cut down experience, and say, 'it is nothing but a parcel of frames and feelings,' is to deny the "power of godliness."

You will observe these men do not deny godliness; they dare not do that; but they deny the power of it in the heart of a saint, under the operation of the Spirit. Every jeer and sneer, every taunting speech thrown out against frames and feelings just manifests what a man's heart is; it is opening a door through which you can look indeed into the secrets of his bosom, and there see the serpent coiled up and hissing enmity against God's truth and against his living people.

2. Others deny it by their life and conversation. If a man walks in the lusts of the flesh; if he wallows in uncleanness or drunkenness; if he be altogether given up to the power of pride and covetousness, he denies the power of godliness by his actions as much as the preceding deny it by their words.

Both these characters deny the power of godliness outwardly the one in word, the other in deed.

3. Others, having more regard to conscience, cannot go that length of outward enmity; yet they too deny it inwardly. For instance, are there not those who secretly think there is no absolute need for the soul to be emptied and stripped, and to have a revelation of Christ; and that they can be saved without such an experience of the bitter and the sweet, the sorrows and the joys that the Lord's people speak of? And are not these secret thoughts much strengthened and fostered by those ministers who profess to preach Christ as distinct from, and far superior to experience? What more common than such language as this from the pulpit - 'I cannot bear to hear people talk of their castings down and liftings up; they dwell and pore so much upon self; why do they not go out of self, and look to a precious Jesus?'

I want to know if this is not inwardly denying the power? They dare not say there is no such thing; but they speak of looking out of self to Christ, as if there were no inward experience of Christ, no visitations of his presence and love; and as if all religion consisted in a dry, speculative knowledge, without one inward grain of life and feeling. Their talk of looking to Christ is very plausible and subtle; but its real aim and drift is to deny the power of vital godliness in the heart of a saint.

4. But there are others who deny it virtually and actually by the non-possession of it. For instance, there are many who say they approve of, and that there is nothing like experimental preaching; they will crowd and cram a chapel to hear the experience of God's people traced out; and yet all the while they virtually and actually deny the power of it by the non-possession of it in their hearts. They have imbibed such a knowledge of the plan of experience from constantly hearing it preached, and they are so certain that it is the truth, that they will hear nothing else, and yet the vital power has never reached their conscience.

V. The exhortation, "from such turn away." But how do we turn away from them? We turn away from them when we feel no union with them. I have thought sometimes that we may divide the quickened family of God into three classes. There are those whose religion is commended to our judgment; there are those whose religion is commended to our conscience; and there are those whose religion is commended to our judgment, conscience, and affections. Have you not felt in conversing with people professing godliness that there are some whose religion you receive in your judgment? You dare not say that they have not the fear of God - nor that what they have told you of the dealings of God upon their soul is not genuine. But still what they say does not much enter into your conscience.

Again; there are others who speak of the dealings of God upon their soul so clearly and plainly, so distinctly and undeniably, that what they say is at once commended to our conscience; but still there is something lacking; it does not kindle a secret flame of love within, nor lay hold of our affections. And then there are others whose religion is not merely commended to our judgment and conscience, but to our very heart and soul. These at once leap into our affections; we love them, and cleave to them, and feel a vital union of soul with them.

Now if we can get hold of people in this threefold way, or in any one of them, we are not to "turn away" from them. None of these deny the power of godliness. If we can receive them into our judgment, it is not so good as receiving them into our conscience; and receiving them into our conscience, is not so good as receiving them into our affections. But if we can get them into our judgment, we must not "turn away" from them. But there are those whom we cannot even get into our judgment; their religion seems to be nothing but deceit and delusion. We cannot trace the hand of God in them; we cannot see any distinct marks of the Spirit upon them. From these we are called upon to "turn away."

But we "turn away" from those who deny the power of godliness in several ways.

1. First, we "turn away" from them as regards conversation with them. If people talk to us about religion, and we speak in an approving tone to them, while there is something in our heart which does not believe they are vitally partakers of grace, we are but playing the hypocrite; we are sanctioning that which we know in our conscience we do not approve of. If therefore any person talks to you about divine things, and you cannot receive him into your judgment - if you drop any word that seems to sanction that man's religion, you are plastering him over with untempered mortar, and sewing pillows under his arm-holes. The word of truth bids you "from such turn away;" that is, have no such conversation with him; give him no false hope; bolster him up with no vain expectations.

2. But secondly, the precept implies that you are to "turn away" from receiving him as a member of the church. If a man or woman comes before you wishing to be received into your church - and you cannot in your conscience believe the work of God with all his profession is begun upon him, you are to "turn away" from receiving him.

3. But you are also commanded to "turn away" from those that deny the power of godliness as regards their company. Unless you are persuaded in your judgment, or your conscience, or your affections, that they are living people of God, you are to "turn away" from them so as not to walk with them in seeming fellowship and union. You cannot indeed as the Apostle says 1Co 5:10 go altogether out of the world; nor would we wish to be otherwise than courteous and civil to those who address us in terms of civility and courtesy. But that is another thing from endorsing their religion, and stamping it with our approval, by freely or frequently associating with them. For myself, if I speak a word whereby I express union to those

whom I do not receive in my heart, I feel that I am telling God and man a deliberate lie, going against the conviction of my conscience, and doing what I hope God may ever keep me from.

But then, on the other hand, courtesy, kindness and civility are due to all. And if we "turn away" from any because we are not able to take them into our bosom, and cannot, consistently with a good conscience, foster their vain hopes and bolster up their delusive expectations, that is no reason why we should treat them with contempt. The word of truth commands us to "honor all men," and towards the people of God to "put on affections of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, patience."

Now, what testimony have we who desire to fear God's name that we have anything more than a "form of godliness?" We have a form; that is very clear. But have we any living testimony in our conscience that we have something more than the form? Have we ever felt the power? We have no testimony that we are possessors of godliness unless we have felt its power.

But there are children of God there may be some here present this morning who are now, and have been for weeks, or even months, without the feeling power; and they are perhaps writing bitter things against themselves because they are not under those lively feelings that they once enjoyed. But since you have once felt it, have you ever denied the power, or with all your darkness and deadness, do you deny it now? Is not this rather the feeling of your soul? "O that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness" Job 29:2,3. Is not this rather the language of your heart, 'O that the Lord would bless me indeed! would revive his work upon my heart, and give me life and power, to enable me to believe in his name! O that he would visit my soul with some discovery of his love, and bring me out of that gloomy and dark state in which I am so sadly sunk!'

These are the feelings of a living soul. But those who have but the "form of godliness," deny all these exercises. They want no revivings; they are sighing after no manifestations; they never plead with the Lord to look down upon them and bless them; they are satisfied with an outside religion; they are contented with the mere form. If they can deceive themselves and one another, it is enough. But the living soul, who has the fear of God alive in his bosom, is not so satisfied; he wants living manifestations of God's presence, sweet communications of God's mercy, and the blessed overshadowings of the Spirit upon his heart. If he has not them, he feels he has nothing.

Thus, while this text cuts to a thousand pieces those who have but the form, it does not wound the poor mourning child of God who is sighing and crying after the power. Every sigh, cry, and groan that he has on account of his dark, dead, gloomy state are so many living evidences of that power. Whence arise your sighs? What makes you mourn upon your bed? Whence spring those breathings in your soul as you sit by your fire-side after the Lord's presence--that he would speak to your soul, and manifest himself to you? Why, they spring from this conviction deeply wrought in your heart, that nothing but the power of God can reach your soul. All short of that is stamped upon your conscience as nothing.

Now these are the people we are to receive to our bosom, those who have godliness, and those who have the power of godliness. But those that deny it, be it in word, or in deed; be it virtually by their life and conversation, or inwardly and secretly--from such we are to "turn away." This may bring us a bad name; this may load us with hatred and reproach; this may often prove very cutting to our feelings; but we shall in the end reap the benefit of it, in having the secret testimony of an honest conscience, and the smiles of an approving God.

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