

# Of Internal Worship, or Godliness.

by John Gill

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*Godliness is the groundwork of internal worship, and without it, there can be no true worship of God.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 34:9-10, Isaiah 29:13, John 4:24, Romans 8:5, 1 Timothy 4:7-8, 1 Timothy 6:6, Hebrews 12:28, James 1:12, 2 Peter 1:3-7, 2 Peter 3:11

**Topics:** "Godliness", "Internal Worship"

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## Description

John Gill emphasizes the significance of internal worship and godliness as the foundation of true worship. He argues that external worship is meaningless without a heart engaged in genuine devotion to God, as true worship must come from the spirit and be rooted in love and reverence for God. Gill explains that godliness, which encompasses a holy disposition towards God, is essential for both internal and external worship, and it is a gift from God that enables believers to serve Him acceptably. He highlights that true godliness leads to spiritual growth and the promise of blessings in this life and the next. Ultimately, Gill calls for a sincere and heartfelt approach to worship that reflects a deep relationship with God.

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## Transcript

A Body of PRACTICAL Divinity

Book 1--Chapter 2

OF INTERNAL WORSHIP;

AND OF GODLINESS THE GROUNDWORK OF IT.

Having considered the object of worship, worship itself is next to be treated of; and which is either internal or external: internal worship requires our first attention, it being of the greatest moment and importance; external worship profits little in comparison of that; if the heart is not engaged in worship, bodily exercise is of little advantage, that being only the form without the power of godliness; yea vain is such worship where the heart is far removed from God. God is a spirit, and must be worshipped with our spirits, the better and more noble part of man; if we serve his law, it should be with our mind, the inward man delighting in it; obedience to it should flow from a principle of love to God in the heart, and with a view to his glory; and if we serve him in the gospel of his Son, it should be with our spirits, with a fervent affection for it; if we pray to him it should be with the spirit and the understanding also; if we sing his praise, it should be with melody in our hearts to the Lord; herein lies powerful godliness; and godliness is the ground work of internal

worship, and without which there can be no worshipping God aright,[1] and therefore it deserves our first consideration.

Godliness is sometimes used for evangelic doctrine, the doctrine that is according to godliness, and productive of it; the whole mystery of godliness, respecting the person, office, and grace of Christ, and salvation by him, which the apostle exhorts Timothy to exercise himself in, in opposition to fables, and vain and trifling things, of no moment (1 Tim 4:7). Sometimes it signifies a holy life and conversation, under the influence and power of the grace of God, as in (2 Pet. 3:11).

"What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" Sometimes it intends some particular duty of religion, or rather some particular grace, "Add--to patience, godliness, to godliness, brotherly love", that is, exercise these (2 Pet. 1:5-7). But in the subject I am upon I consider it as an assemblage of graces, as containing the whole of grace in the heart, the exercise of which is necessary to serve and worship God with reverence and godly fear (Heb. 12:28), and without this there can be no internal worship of God.

This is no other than the inward devotion of the mind, a fervency of spirit in serving the Lord; it is a holy disposition of the soul towards God. This is *qeosebeia*, the true worship of God (1 Tim. 2:10), the ground and foundation of it, without which there can be none. This is "life and godliness", or vital powerful godliness (2 Pet. 1:3), and "the things pertaining" to it are faith, hope, love, and every other grace, of which it consists, and in the exercise of which it lies, and in this is all internal religion and worship. 1.

First, such a gracious disposition Godward is not to be found in unregenerate men, only in such who are truly partakers of the grace of God. It is godliness which distinguishes between one who truly serves and worships God, and one that serves and worships him not. The one as he is denominated from it a godly man, so likewise *qeosebHV*, a true worshipper of God (John 9:31), the other, as from the want of it, he is called an ungodly man, so *asebHV*, one that is without the worship of God (1 Pet. 4:18). 1a.

First, such a gracious disposition of the mind towards God, which is requisite to the service and worship of him, is not to be found in unregenerate men; their character is this, that they are "after the flesh", or are carnal men; and only "mind the things of the flesh", carnal things, fleshly lusts, &c. (Rom. 8:5), there is no disposition in their minds towards God and his worship; they savour not the things of God, but the things which be of men; and therefore having no inward disposition Godward, they are truly reckoned ungodly men, and destitute of the worship of him. 1b.

Secondly, such a gracious disposition towards God and his service, which is rightly called "godliness", is only to be found in such who are partakers of the grace of God in truth; for, 1b1. Their character is, that they are "after the Spirit", or are spiritual men; they are born of the Spirit and his grace, and so are spirit or spiritual, in whom the Spirit of God dwells, and in whom grace is the governing principle; though they are not without flesh, and have much carnality in them, yet being renewed in their minds, their conversations are spiritual; they walk after and live in the Spirit.

Hence, 1b2. They mind "the things of the Spirit", they love spiritual doctrines, desire spiritual gifts, especially an increase of spiritual grace, and a clearer view of interest in all spiritual blessings; they savour the things of God, and of the Spirit of God; they have a gust for them, a relish of them, they are sweet unto them, their taste being changed. Wherefore, 1b3. The disposition of their souls is Godward, and to his service; they have an understanding of him, and desire to know more of him, and follow on to know him the use of means; their thoughts are employed about him, they think on his name, his nature, and

perfections, and lovingkindness, as displayed in Christ; their affections are set upon him, and they love him cordially and sincerely; their desires are after him, and to the remembrance of his name; they pant after more communion with him, and the manifestations of his love unto them; they have their spiritual senses exercised upon him; they see him with the eyes of their understandings opened, his beauty, his power, and his glory, in the sanctuary; they hear his gospel with pleasure, it is a joyful sound unto them, and they can distinguish his voice from that of a stranger; they taste that the Lord is gracious; his word and the doctrines of it, his fruit and the blessings of his grace are sweet to their taste, these are savory things which their souls love; they handle Christ the word of life, and feel the power of his gospel on them; that effectually working in them through the demonstration of the spirit.

Now, 1b4. These are truly godly persons, eusebeiV (2 Pet. 2:9), persons well disposed to the worship of God, and who rightly perform it; these have their minds powerfully impressed with the doctrine that is according to godliness, under the influence of which they live soberly, righteously, and godly; these have all things given them pertaining to life and godliness, every grace, and every needful supply and increase of it; in the exercise of which lies internal worship, or inward, spiritual, experimental, and practical religion; which is called eusebeia, or "godliness", and stands opposed to bodily exercise, or external worship (1 Tim. 4:8). 2.

Secondly, godliness not in name and profession only, but godliness in the life and power of it, an inward fervent devotion of the mind, a gracious disposition of the heart towards God, as has been explained, is the ground work of true religion; and without this there can be no internal worship, nor indeed any external worship rightly performed; for, 2a. Without the knowledge of God there can be no true worship of him; the Samaritans worshipped they knew not what, and so their worship[2] was not right.

Whom the Athenians ignorantly worshipped, him the apostle declared unto them; nor is a natural knowledge of God by the creatures sufficient to teach men the worship of God and engage them in it; the wise philosophers, who, by the light of nature, by the works of creation, knew there was a God, yet they glorified him not as God. True spiritual, experimental, and evangelical knowledge of God, is the knowledge of God in Christ; and as our worship of him is in and by Christ, there can be no true worship of him without such knowledge of him, even of him as our covenant God in Christ; and as this will direct us to the right object of worship, and the true manner of worship, so it will influence and engage unto it; "Whose I am, and whom I serve" (Acts 27:23). 2b.

Without faith in God, which is another branch of powerful godliness, there can be no true worship of God; for whatsoever is not of faith is sin; and without it, it is impossible to please God in any part of worship and service; all worship performed to God under the Old Testament dispensation which was agreeable to him, was by faith, as the instances of Abel and Jacob, of Moses and the children of Israel show (Heb. 11:4,5,21,28). And under the gospel dispensation, whenever we draw nigh to God in any part of worship, it must be in faith; whoever comes to God, and is a worshipper of him, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him; and if we come to the throne of grace and there ask anything of God, it must be asked in faith; and if we attend upon him in the ministry of the word, it must be in the exercise of faith, for the word only profits as it is mixed with faith by them that hear it (Heb. 10:22; 4:12), now faith is one of the things pertaining to life and godliness, and is a part of it; and therefore without godliness, or a gracious disposition of the soul towards God, there can be no true worship of him. 2c.

Without the fear of God, another branch of vital godliness, there can be no worship of him. The fear of God is sometimes put for the whole of worship, both internal and external, "God is greatly to be feared in the

assembly of his saints", where his solemn worship is performed, "and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him"; and fear and reverence are so necessary to the service and worship of God, that the Psalmist exhorts men to "serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling"; and as for himself, he says, "in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple"; (see Ps 89:7; 2:11; 5:7), where there is no fear of God before the eyes and upon the hearts of men, there is no worship of him; grace in the heart, and that in exercise, or inward powerful godliness, which is the same thing, is absolutely necessary to worship God in an acceptable manner (Heb. 12:28). 2d.

Spiritual internal worship cannot be performed without love to God, another branch of real godliness. Charity, or love, is the internal principle from whence obedience to God, and the worship of him, should spring; hence love to God with all the heart and soul, as well as fear, is premised unto it (Deut. 10:12), for such affectionate, cordial, and hearty service is only acceptable to him, and can never be where the heart is destitute of godliness. 2e. And as they are spiritual worshippers that God seeks, and spiritual worship that is only acceptable to him, it being suitable to his nature who is a spirit; none but a spiritual man can perform it, or that is possessed of true grace, or vital godliness; they that are in the flesh, in a state of nature, carnal men, who have no disposition Godward, cannot please God, or do that which is acceptable in his sight (Rom. 8:8). 2f.

Nor can a man worship God sincerely, if he has only the form and not the power of godliness; if he only draws nigh to God with his mouth, and honours him with his lips, and his heart is removed far from him, and his fear towards him taught by the precept of men, his worship will be in vain and unacceptable to him (Isa. 29:13), from all which it appears how necessary godliness is to the worship of God, and that it may well be reckoned the groundwork and foundation of it. Now this gracious disposition of the mind Godward, which may therefore be truly called godliness, and which is so necessary to the worship of God, that it cannot be performed without it, is not of a man's self, it is not naturally in man; yea, as has been seen, the bias and disposition of the minds of men are naturally the reverse; wherefore this disposition must be owing to the grace of God, and must be a gift of his; it is he that gives godliness itself, and all things appertaining to it; and indeed as it is an assemblage of all the graces of the Spirit, and every grace is a gift, that must be such.

Knowledge of God is a gift of his; faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God. Hope that is good, is a good hope through grace; love cannot be purchased at any rate; the fear of God is what is implanted in the heart by the grace of God, and so all others; and even all supplies of grace to maintain, encourage, increase, and support such a disposition, are freely given of God; and all grace, as it comes from God, it points to God again, and disposes the heart Godward. 3.

Thirdly, great is the profit, and many the advantages, that accrue from godliness to the possessors of it. 3a. First, that itself is said to be gain to the persons that have it; "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6), there were some indeed who "supposed that gain is godliness" (1 Tim.6:5), either who thought that godliness was to be gained with money, as Simon Magus thought the gifts of the Holy Ghost were; but as not they, so neither the graces of the Spirit are to be obtained in such a way: or they were such who took up a profession of godliness, and made an outward show of it, for the sake of present or future gain; to gain a name in a church of Christ, to get a reputation among godly neighbours and acquaintance, and for the sake of worldly interest in godly wealthy relations, or to obtain the favour of God now, and heaven hereafter; but after all, what will be the hope and gain of such a person when "God takes away his soul?" (Job 27:8), or they are such who think, or at least act as if they thought, that all religion lay in gain, in getting money; since their serving God and Christ, and all they do in a religious way, is for filthy

lucre's sake, every one looking for his gain from his quarter.

But real godliness is itself true gain; it may be said of it as it is of wisdom, "the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof, than fine gold" (Prov. 3:14). Such who, while in a state of ungodliness, were "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked", being possessed of godliness, come into good circumstances; who before were in debt, owed ten thousand talents, and had nothing to pay, and were liable to a prison, all their debts are freely forgiven them, and the whole score of them cleared; who before were in rags, and had nothing to cover their naked souls before God, are now clothed with change of raiment, with a robe of righteousness and garments of salvation; who before were starving, and would have been glad of husks which swine do eat, are now fed with the finest of the wheat, with angels' food, at Christ's table, as with marrow and fatness; these are come into very affluent circumstances, to great riches, durable and unsearchable; and to great honour also, being raised as beggars from the dunghill, to sit among princes, and to inherit the throne of glory; yea are made kings and priests unto God, have a kingdom of grace now, and are heirs of the kingdom of glory; they who lived without God in the world, and were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, are now in a good family, fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God; and being children of God are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, possessed of the riches of grace, and entitled to the riches of glory; their gain is great indeed, and sufficient to give them full contentment. 3b.

Secondly, godliness is said to be "profitable unto all things" (1 Tim. 4:8), whereas bodily exercise, or a presentation of the body only in an attendance of public worship, "profiteth little", or "for a little time;"[3] for sometimes such sort of religion and worship lasts but for a little while, as in temporary believers, and in the stony ground hearers, and where it continues, it profits not in matters of the greatest importance; it may be profitable to others, by way of example, as to children and servants in a man's family, and to a community with whom he attends for the secular support of it; and it may be profitable to himself, to keep him from being elsewhere, in bad company, which might lead into many snares and temptations, and hurtful lusts; but is of no profit to obtain eternal life, since a man may constantly hear the word, and attend on and submit unto all ordinances, and yet Christ may say to him at the last day, "Depart from me, I know you not"; for there may be such bodily exercise or external worship, where there is no true grace nor vital religion: but "godliness", powerful vital godliness, internal religion, is "profitable unto all things"; it is even profitable to the health of a man's body, for the fear of the Lord, which is the same thing, is "health to the navel", and "marrow to the bones"; whereas by an ungodly course of life men bring upon themselves diseases painful and incurable; but more especially godliness is profitable to promote the welfare of the soul; for by means of that, and in the exercise of it, the soul of a good man, as of Gaius, prospers and is in good health; he finds it always good for him to draw nigh unto God, where he has much communion with him, and receives much from him: and such a man is profitable to others, for godly men are made a blessing to all about them, they are the light of the world, and the salt of the earth; though indeed no man can be profitable to God by all his external and internal religion, as he that is wise and good may be profitable to himself and others; for when he has done all he can, or by the grace of God is assisted to do, he is but an unprofitable servant. 3c.

Thirdly, godliness has "the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8). 3c1. Of the present life, both temporal and spiritual. A godly man has the promise of temporal life, of the blessings of it, of good things in it, yea that he shall want no good thing that is needful for him; and of a continuance of this life, when an ungodly man does not live out half his days; God satisfies the godly man with long life, and shows him his salvation (Ps. 34:9,10; 37:3; 84:11; 91:16), and of the present spiritual

life, of all things pertaining to it, of all needful supplies of grace to maintain and support it, and of the continuance of it, and of its springing up into and issuing in everlasting life. 3c2.

Of the future life of happiness and glory. It is most certain that there is a future life, and that there is a promise of eternal life in it, made by God who cannot lie; this promise is made to the godly man (Jam. 1:12), not to be enjoyed by him through any merit of his, for that is the gift of God through Christ; and a promise being made of it, and its being by promise, show that it is not of the works of men but of the grace of God; and when godliness is said to have the promise of it, it is a promise God has made to his own grace, and not to the merits of men.

However, it is a plain case, that real godliness is of great avail to men, both with respect to time and eternity. Now as inward powerful godliness is, as has been seen, a disposition of the soul Godward, from whom all grace comes and to whom it tends, and as it is an assemblage of every grace,[4] in the exercise of which all internal worship and experimental religion lies, I therefore begin with it, and shall in the following chapters consider the branches of it in which it opens; as the knowledge of God, repentance towards God, fear of him, faith and trust in him, the hope of things from him, love to him, joy in him, humility, self-denial, patience, submission, and resignation to the will of God, thankfulness for every mercy, with every other grace necessary to the worship of God, and which belongs to experimental religion and godliness. ENDNOTES:

[1] osiosthV kai eusebeia (qerapeia) qewn, Platonis Euthyphro, p. 9.

[2] eusebhV de o thn qeian episthmhn ecwn, Hierocles in Carmin, Pythag. p. 26. einai te thn eusebeian episthmhn qewn qerapeiaV, Laert. I. 7. in Vita Zenonis.

[3] proV to oligon.

[4] eusebeia, frequently used in scripture, and rendered godliness, is in heathen writers said to be hgemwn arch kai mhthr, "the leader, the beginning and mother of all virtues"; kai sperma tw n aga qwn apantwn hmin, "and the seed of all good things in us", Hierocles in Carmin. Pythagor. p. 10. 69. 126.

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