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# HAVING A FORM OF GODLINESS BUT DENYING THE POWER THEREOF

2 Timothy 3:5

Ezekiel, Oghenekaro

*“To be forewarned is to be forearmed”.* The future of the church looked rather rough. Timothy and the people he would teach needed to get ready for it. The dangers Paul described in **2 Timothy** are dangers which lie ahead for every generation. When the church is young the people are fired up. They study and pray, believing that God’s Word holds the answer to man’s needs. But as each generation passes, the tendency is for the beliefs and practices to become more and more crystallized and a matter of tradition. Following close to this is the stage of ritualism. The third stage is unchanged lives. Finally, full departure from the faith comes. Thus, the warning given Timothy might just as well have been written to any preacher alive today. Every Christian soldier must be cautioned about the peril of apostasy.

For those who have a form of godliness are those who make an outward display of religion. They present themselves as godly, but it is

all for show. There is no power behind their religion, as evidenced in the fact that their lives are unchanged. They speak of God and live in sin, and they are fine with that arrangement. As commentator Charles Ellicott wrote, *“These, by claiming the title of Christians, wearing before men the uniform of Christ, but by their lives dishonouring His name, did the gravest injury to the holy Christian cause”* (*Ellicott’s Bible Commentary for English Readers*, entry for **2 Timothy 3:5**).

Godliness has to do with the way we live. It impacts and changes our lives. As the word *“godliness”* implies, it has to do with holiness, to living like God. Yet we see from the Scriptures quoted above, that people will fall into a habit of living ungodly lives, yet at the same time continue to hold to *“a form of godliness”!* *“A form of godliness”* does not alter the way a person lives! It allows them to do what they want to do ~ to set their own standards, and yet proclaim that

it is acceptable to God, and is therefore “*Godly*” what they believe, and do. This is the big deception of religion today. It allows “*standards*” that God disapproves of, yet seeks to convince us that it is, in fact, acceptable. The religious world has no serious convictions about passing their legislation that encourages people to live in direct rebellion to the Scriptures. There are three things mentioned in this scripture

1. **Having a form of godliness.**
2. **Denying the power of godliness.**
3. **From such turn away.**

#### **A FORM OF GODLINESS:**

Christianity was never ever “*a form of godliness.*” It has always been the “*real thing*” – godliness is that lifestyle which glorifies God. It is that which allows the Holy Spirit to set God’s standards in our life. Godliness sets the pattern for us – not us dictating to God what is acceptable, and what is not acceptable. If our belief system does not change our lives, and bring us into a more direct and closer walk and personal relationship with Jesus Christ, then we have to seriously question its authenticity! It does not matter whether “*a form of godliness*” comes from a dynamic preacher or a church system ~ if it does not line up with the clear teachings of Scripture, turn away from it. Over time, the standards have deteriorated, and the conviction between right and wrong has become less and less, until today we see “*right is wrong*” and “*wrong is right,*” and “*God is such a God of love He won’t turn anyone away from eternal life,*”

etc. This “*form of godliness*” is a lie. It is a false doctrine of “*everyone doing that which is right in their own eyes*” (*Judges 21:25*).

I think one of the greatest tragedies and shocks in life anyone could ever have, would be to go to church faithfully all their life, yet never really know Jesus, and then, when they stand before God, to hear Him say, “*Depart from Me, I never knew you*” (*Matthew 7:21-23*). Yet that is exactly what “*a form of godliness*” does to people. It is a deception that allows them to set lower standards for their lives than that which is acceptable to God. It allows people to justify their character traits, make excuses for their selfish lifestyles, live in sin, and persecute the believers of the truth, etc. Yet, ironically, they still believe they have an authority to “*speak on behalf of God*”! They believe they know better than the truth of Jesus Christ. They believe “*a form of godliness*” allows them to be “*lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God*” (*2 Timothy 3:2-4*). All those traits corrupt us, rather than make us more God-like. Yet, in spite of all these things, they still cling on to “*a form of godliness*” to make it “*all right.*” We certainly need to ask ourselves this question: “*Whose standards are we living by?*” “*Ours?*” Or, “*God’s?*”

## BUT DENYING THE POWER OF GODLINESS:

If there is one thing that reveals “*a form of godliness*,” it is the lack of true spiritual power that it demonstrates. There is no power to change lives! Its “power” is in words, customs, cultural things, but not in God! The true Gospel power is denied. To “deny” the power is “to contradict, i.e. disavow, reject, abnegate”. When we are living a godly life we have a power and an authority in our life to “do that which is right in the sight of the Lord” (that is, obeying His voice) (**Exodus 15:16; Deuteronomy 28:1-14**). We then discover we have “power” to forsake the descriptions given in **2 Timothy 3**. We do not have to rely upon “*a form of godliness*,” because we have Biblical power through a separated lifestyle unto God. The word “power” here is “*dunamis*,” meaning “*natural capability, inherent power; capability of anything, ability to perform anything; then, absolutely, not merely power capable of action, but, power in action*” (Bullinger’s). This “*dunamis*” is the same power of **Acts 1:8** and has to do with the infilling of God’s Holy Spirit in our lives, to make us active for God, and to enable us to live separated lives unto God! There is power in living a separated lifestyle unto God and His glory!

The Scripture is clear when it says, “**For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power** (the same word “*dunamis*” as in **2 Timothy 3:5**)” (see also **1 Corinthians 4:20**). In the previous verse, the Apostle Paul said to the people, “**I want to know your**

**power, not your words.**” But what do we see again and again, today, in the name of Christianity? Words, words, words! And educated words at that! But what has it produced (generally speaking) in the Kingdom of God? A weak, powerless generation of cautious and passive “*Christian believers*,” who still live in bondage, yet, at the same time, are arrogant with it. Blame shifters! “*It’s not my fault! It’s my parents, the devil, the church, I was born that way*” ~ and so it goes on. The result is always “*powerlessness*”! **We need to seriously ask ourselves:** “*Is there true spiritual power in my life?*” And, “*If not, then why not?*” What are we going to do about it?

Did Jesus come into this world to pay the supreme sacrifice, and price of redemption for mankind, merely for it to be demonstrated in a powerless “*form of godliness*”? Of course not! There’s much more to it than that. He came to live inside of us! He came to take over! And when Jesus lives within us ~ and is Lord ~ we certainly do not portray the traits of our Scripture references of the 75% fruitless hearers (**Luke 8:5-8**)! “**A form of godliness**” allows a lifestyle that falls below the accepted standard of what the cross of Jesus Christ is all about. It is a deceptive “*band aid*” that does not deliver what the people are led to believe!

## FROM SUCH TURN AWAY:

The Bible is clear in its instructions. If the lives of those proclaiming their “*form of godliness*” do not have a corresponding lifestyle that is

separated unto God (the God of the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit of Truth), then we are told to **“turn away”** from them. Do not allow them to influence you (because they will if we are not careful). That’s why determining our friendships is important. There is a thing called *“power of influence”* that affects us ~ either positively or negatively. We become like the environment we live in, and the people we mix with. If you want to lift your standards in life, get input and friendly with those who are setting a higher example. They will inspire you to rise above yourself. In the same way, if you allow negative people to influence you, they will pull you down to a lower level. So, you have to ask yourself very seriously, *“Do I want to live my life with ‘a form of godliness,’ or with the true godliness as portrayed in the Bible”*? If you want the second, then you have to associate with those who set that standard. The Bible clearly tells us to **“turn away”** from the others, for, if we don’t, they will cause us to become like them, justifying ourselves and then trying to cover it over with **“a form of godliness.”** And that, is deception.

Again, let’s ask ourselves another question: *“Who has the most influence on my life?”* If that influence is not good, what are you going to do about it? Don’t expect God to do something

## Conclusion

**Activity vs. Devotion** - Can we discern a difference between Church activity and devotion? It has been interesting to note the extremely widespread use of the words *active* and *inactive* to describe members of the Church. If people show up

about it. He told us to **“turn away from such.”** The next decision is yours!

**“A form of godliness”** does not bring eternal answers. It does not change lives; it only causes people to accept their lot as being from God. That is exactly what the devil wants us to believe, “that we’re born like that and we have to live with it” “to the glory of God” (of course! Let’s blame God!).

As we get closer to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are going to see the gap between the godly and those with **“a form of godliness”** get further and further apart. The life of Biblical godliness will be rejected more and more as **“evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived”** (become more religiously deceived) (**2 Timothy 3:13**). If you recognize that you are allowing those with **“a form of godliness”** to influence your life negatively, then the Bible instructs you: **“from such turn away.”** It is something you have to do. It is not God’s will for you to be dragged down by others who do not have the right godly standards. Recognize what is happening, and make decisions that will bring you closer to Jesus, give you more power, and a freedom to live your life **“to the glory of God”**. Amen.

for most of their meetings, we call them active. On the other hand, if they miss most of their meetings, we label them inactive.

It seems that the words *active* and *inactive* don't adequately capture the dimensions of devotion, consecration, commitment, and godliness. For example, the sons of Eli regularly officiated in the temple despite the fact that they were impure and desecrated the sacrifices of those who had come to worship (**1 Samuel 2-3**). By today's statistical standards, they were "active" because they showed up every day.

As much as God values our attendance, **Hebrews 10:25**, he would want us to be committed to Him, not just to have a form of godliness, not just to tick the box, but have the real power in Christianity.

May His be blessed in our heart in Jesus' name, Amen.