

A Form of Godliness that Denies the Power Thereof

By Shawn Reynolds

Bible Text: 2 Timothy 3:5
Preached on: Sunday, January 8, 2017

Grace Particular Baptist Church
5725 Imperial Lakes Blvd
Mulberry, FL 33860

Website: www.onefoldoneshepherd.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/graceparticular

We begin today by speaking and reading our text. Our text is found in 2 Timothy 3:5. It reads this way,

5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

Let us pray.

Dear heavenly Father, how gracious and holy thou art. I thank thee, O Lord, for bringing me and my family back to thy people this morning to this place of worship. I pray, Lord, for thy healing to be upon Rebecca who is at home and the pastor who is at home this morning. Lord, may you come with thy power, may you come to their souls and to their bodies in healing, Lord, as only thou can. May they know thy presence. O Lord, for those of us here today not feeling well, we pray, Lord, that you would be pleased to put thy healing hand upon us. And Lord, we ask in this place today that you would fill it with thyself, fill it with thy Spirit, instruct us, Lord, and bring us to thy holy feet. And Lord, may you reveal thyself in thy word today. Lord, search us and reveal, Lord, thy work in our souls and may you be glorified. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Our text once again this morning comes from 2 Timothy 3:5, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." I want to read the first four verses as we come down to verse 5 because it's pretty interesting how Paul lays this out in this part of his letter to Timothy.

Chapter 3 begins this way, he says, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." How true that is. "For men shall be lovers of their own selves," not something we see any different today, "covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God."

Now, when you read those first four verses and you hear that warning that Paul puts to the people of God, those ones mentioned there are pretty evident to us. Those are not as hard to detect or to see. When we get to verse 5 and he says, "Having a form of

godliness," that changes everything. That is the thing that trips the child of God, a form of godliness. Paul says there are those that have a form of godliness and then he tells us why it's a form of godliness, it's because they deny the power thereof. We hear that a lot in creeds. We hear that a lot in man's religion. We hear that a lot today in the popular religions where man gathers to argue things in the Bible about his point of view or a theological point of view and what's missing? It's the power thereof. The form of godliness will always deny the power thereof.

We have found in the history of the church, the assembly church, I should say, that there have always been those among the people of God who come in with a form of godliness and Paul, you know, the word of God is filled for the child of God with two things: warnings and promises and the Lord in his word has given us both. He cares so much for his church that he leaves the warnings but he also gives us the promises. This verse has both of them in it. It has a warning to us for those that would gather around the body of Christ and would have a form of godliness.

But as is customary, today I don't really want to talk about those on the outside of the church, I want to talk about your soul. I want to talk about why this verse is very experiential to the child of God because, you see, in the word of God or in the soul of the believer, we have enemies. We have enemies and as I said, the ones that come to us fiercely, those that reject anything that we have to say about our Lord, those are easy to see but it's the form of godliness that's very hard. It takes the power of the Holy Ghost to see them, to understand them. We understand that the Bible tells us that Satan comes to us, can even come as one of two: a roaring lion or an angel of light. The roaring lion and the fierceness of Satan coming to us is easier to detect. "Lord, I know this isn't the truth. Lord, I know." But when he transforms himself into an angel of light, it shows the child of God how dependent we are in this life for the Lord to reveal what is the truth, who has the truth, is that truth a truth of yours.

Look, if the enemy can transform himself into an angel of light, that's one of the most scary Scriptures to me. Then you take the world which is another enemy of the child of God. The world, every time we mention the world, we think of the allurements of it, how it dresses itself up, how it seems to be something that's enticing to the child of God. And in the world's deceptiveness, it's very hard at times. We look at passages and we extract passages out of the word and we say, "Oh well, God's people were favored this way and if they were favored in this time, I should be able to partake in the world. I should be able to have the things of the world." So the world takes it's own way of showing the child of God, some outwardly and more vividly to our face, to our discernment, that's easy to see but a lot of deception. All the enemies are that way.

Then we come to the flesh and that's where we have today the warning to us, the flesh, this part of us that wars against the new man, the new man of grace, the seed of Christ, the Holy Spirit that's within us. That old nature, when it rises itself up in anger or unbelief or wickedness, when it does that, the child of God is brought to see it in the light of how fierce it can be. But what about the form of godliness? What about that? That's the side of the flesh that we don't readily accept or see that's in us, a form of godliness.

Godliness is defined this way: a belief in God, a reverence for his character and laws of religious life. That's a very basic definition of what godliness is. Man takes godliness and transforms it into what he believes is godliness. He defines it himself but he defines it from a man-centered religion. The word of God defines godliness as the life of Christ. The word of God defines godliness of what Christ has done and we'll see that today, Lord willing. But this form of godliness as we're warned here "from such turn away," it's a twofold exhortation to the child of God. 1. When that form of godliness comes up to us, that presents itself from this world, we are to turn away from it in the power thereof. But it's also in the soul. The form of godliness rears itself in many ways: in duties of religion, in even coming here today to hear the word of God. It can be a form of godliness.

You say, "Well, how can that be?" Well, we're told in Romans that anything not of faith is sin and we can come here today even to sit with God's people and to hear the Gospel and not have faith. We could come here in a formal duty. We could come here out of a feel like we need to or have to or a want to to perform something for God in the week because maybe we feel like we haven't given the Lord his time this week.

The form of godliness is clearly a danger and Paul brings that out here and, like I said, when we read those first four verses, those things are some active outward sins. But that form of godliness for the child of God takes on a whole other meaning. It's something that lurks inside of him. It's a pointing out of sin in others. It's a high righteous mind that we may think that it is the mind of Christ. But the mind of Christ is a humble mind. The mind of Christ is a loving mind. And if you don't think that it is, you don't need to go anywhere further than the fruit of the Spirit because that is the fruit of Christ and we'll see that today.

The inspired word of God before us this morning is one that has many on record for us. Many that have a form of godliness but they deny the power thereof. I think we get in a lot of trouble when we have godly things in this life that we deem to be godly but we start to look within ourselves, our own understanding, our own ability, our own way of doing things, our own way of seeking God. You see, that is a form of godliness because it denies the power thereof. How is it that we understand? It's by the Holy Spirit. It's by Christ revealing himself. How is it that we do? It's because of the faith of the Son of God. How is it that we believe? It's because of him. How is it that we walk and we live in this life? It's because of the life that is in his Son and if we be in his Son, that is the life we have to live in this life and the life to come.

My desire this morning is to talk about this form of godliness and hopefully it is twofold as a warning to the people of God and also as a promise to the people of God because there is an antidote for it and it's Christ. It's the life of Christ being lived out in your soul and the Holy Spirit's testimony in the child of God is of Christ and Christ alone. The Holy Spirit's testimony to you if you be in Christ will always be what Christ has done. It will never be what you have done. It will never be what you can do. It will never be how you can obey. It will never be how you can perform anything outside of Christ's power.

So this morning I want to look at a few that have been left on record for us and I want to start with one that's very scary to us. All of them are to me but the first one is Judas. We know from Judas's life that Matthew 10:1 tells us this, "And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power." Listen, that was 12 disciples. Judas was one of them. "He gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease." Judas walked with the people of God, the 11 called sheep who the Lord endued them with power from above to cast out devils, power over the unclean spirits and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. This was a power given to Judas but we are told in Judas's life, we're even told later, that he was a keeper of the bag. He was the treasurer for those 12. He was the one that watched over the funds. We even have a time that we have a picture of his piety, so to speak. When the women came and she broke the alabaster oil over Jesus' feet and she anointed his feet and she started washing them with her hair and Judas was the one who stood up and he said, "Listen, we should have sold that. We could have sold that and gave that to the poor." Well, that sounds like godliness, doesn't it? But the word of God says on record, the Holy Spirit says he said that because of his own deceit. He was the keeper of the bag. He was the one who was stealing from the disciples but he had a form of godliness. He had something and I told you, this is very humbling to the child of God.

I remember the Lord using that passage early in my life and bringing me to the end of myself, calling out to the Lord, "Then what, Lord? What can I do? What must I do? How can one who has this power to cast out devils that you gave, not be one of your children?" And we see the sovereignty of God in that, that the Lord can use a donkey, he use a reprobate, one that was called the son of perdition who never was elected before the foundation of the world, but to deceive those that were in the circle and to betray the Son of God. That's very humbling to me. It's very searching to me. To me, it debases the creature. It debases the purpose of the creature, the person in this life. We are here to glorify God in whatever way he deems that brings him glory and it's not of us.

So we see, as I said, so we've got that understanding of him, we have that understanding of Judas, but we know what his end was. We know that Jesus called him the son of perdition. We know that when Jesus dismissed him, Satan entered into him and we know that Judas had a form of repentance. We know that he came back to them and he said, "Listen, I betrayed him." And what did the priest say to him? "What is that to us?" And he went and he hung himself and he ended his life, why? Because he had no Christ in him. He had not life in him.

That's the first one and then we have Esau. Esau is left on record as, I mean, have you ever thought about Jacob and Esau? I mean, we know, Romans tells us that the Lord loved one and hated the other but they are both sons of Isaac who was a son of God, who was a child of God. And we have these two sons and the Lord elected one to salvation and he elected one to damnation and the one that he elected to damnation was the firstborn, was the one with the birthright. You know, when you read that account, I struggled with that account early in my life because Jacob, his name is supplanter. He seemed to be such a scoundrel. You know, in the way we say things and do things, it's not

fair what he did. This is the sovereignty of God, that the Lord ordained Jacob to live and to do the things that he did, to be anointed the way that he was.

But what about Esau? Turn with me over to Hebrews 12 because this too is a very chilling passage. Hebrews 12, beginning in verse 14. Paul writes, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau." Like I said, you look at that and you go, "Well, what do we know about Esau? What is put on record that he was a great enemy of God?" Well, he was. He was in his soul. He will always be an enemy of God but we didn't see it outwardly. In fact, let's read on.

"Who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." We have a form of godliness. We have one who said, "I'm sorry for what I've done. I'm sorry for selling my birthright. Oh, can't I have something? Oh, can't I be given something? Isn't there something for me?" And he cried and he cried and he wanted repentance. And we look at something like that or we look at people that we deal with today and we say, "Wow, they must have a great work going on in their soul. That must be a great and mighty work of the Almighty God to humble them." But we're told there was no repentance for him. We're told that he wasn't a child of God but he had a form of godliness.

As we turn into this new year which is just another blip in time, so to speak, we have this warning for us today that the form of godliness will always deny the power of God. He sought this in himself. He wanted repentance for himself. Judas wanted everything for himself, never once seeking God.

But what about Saul? Old Testament Saul? In the Old Testament, Saul was a king. Do you remember Saul? In all of his glory as the first king of Israel and, you know, he addressed the people many times and he stood above them and he said, "Blessed be the name of the Lord. Blessed be God. Blessed be God." And all the people rallied around Saul. They wanted this king over them. But do you remember the time that Samuel was tarrying and he didn't come at the time that he was supposed to come and Saul decided he would offer a sacrifice to God? "Well, if the priest isn't here, I'll do it myself." Will worship." How many of us today understand that will worship is an affront to an Almighty God, an orderly God, a God who has set out in his word that tells us that life is only in Christ as our perfect prophet, our perfect priest, and our perfect king? But even in his life, he sought out to be something that God did not make him and as Samuel pronounced that God would take his kingdom from him, we have one who turned in his life and even tried to kill the one who was one after God's own heart.

So we see throughout the word we have many people that are put on record that have a form of godliness. We read about forms of godliness and it makes us stumble at times. When we read of Nebuchadnezzar and the things that he said at the end of his life, we say, "Oh, he must have been a child of God." But we're not given that. We're given that

one was brought to the end of himself to exalt the Almighty God, for every knee shall bow. The Lord is not slack concerning his promises and he's not slack concerning the fulfillment of his prophecies and he's not slack concerning the glory of himself.

The last one I'll mention is Saul in the New Testament. This one hits a little closer to home because he is a child of God. But we're put on record Paul said, "I did all of those things ignorantly," but he did them in the name of religion. He got the papers and he went and he persecuted the church and he did it all in the name of religion. Later he would say that he did it ignorantly. Later he would have great repentance because of that. But for all of that, Paul would come to say in Romans 7 that, "in my flesh dwelleth no good thing." You see, Paul was revealed that he was too made up of flesh and spirit. He too was made up of the old and the new man and that old man was never reformed. He never did anything good, no matter how much even that old nature would disguise itself in a form of godliness.

As I said this morning, it is a great warning. It is. The people of God hopefully as the Holy Spirit brings it with great power, causes a searching in our soul to say, "Lord, is that form of godliness found in me? And if it is, O Lord, put it to death to where that true godliness, that true godliness takes over, rules in my life." That is the new nature.

You know, the word of God, as I said, from start to finish speaks of this godliness but I'm going to confine myself this morning just to the letters that he wrote to Timothy. So if you turn over to 1 Timothy 3, we're going to get started this morning, I'm sorry, it's 1 Timothy 4. I want to talk about where Paul mentions godliness and in what light he mentions it. Do you want to know what the power thereof is? Do you want to know what godliness is? Paul wrote about it. Not the form, the form is absent of the power. It's denying the power of Christ.

I think as I speak to people in this life, as I speak to "religious people," as I converse with them, that always seems to be in my life the dividing point, denying the power thereof. You want to talk about creeds, you want to talk about great men of the past, you want to talk about great men of now, you want to talk about great theology, God doing this, God doing that, but if it ends in the creature, if it ends in your ability, if it ends in your duty, if it ends in what you must do to please God, you have taken the crown from the one who has finished all things for his people, you have taken that crown off of his head and you have put it on your own. Denying the power of Christ. I pray that that sin not be found in any of us this day, and if it is, that the Lord would mortify it. "Mortify it. Show us, Lord, that we are nothing without you. Lord, without your power, I can do nothing."

I think of that in dealing or in relationship to some of the people of God as I'm struggling with things going on in their life and things going on in my life. They struggle with the same enemies that I do so I know how fierce they are. "O Lord, don't give me...I don't want a form of godliness in dealing with those that you have chosen, Lord. I want to deal with them in your godliness, in your love, in your charity, by your faith." And may the Lord be pleased to write that upon our hearts this morning.

As I said, we'll begin here in 1 Timothy 4 and we look at verse 7, he says, "But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness." So he puts godliness in opposition with tradition. He puts godliness in opposition to the things that have been passed down from one generation to the next. Old wives' fables is the way that it's looked at here and I think we all know that. I think we all have things that we have gathered from our past from our upbringing that not necessarily are, let's say, conforming to the word of God. There are things that we've picked up in this life, "Well, if I do this, then God will bless me this way. Or if I stay away from this, then I won't get this sickness. If I do this..." You know, that's an affront to the sovereignty of God. You know that, right? That when we live that way or we live in a duty type religion that way or, "If I just do this, or if I do this," it denies the power thereof. It's a form of godliness. Paul said to stay away from that. Stay away from the profaneness that's found in this world because that's what the worldling has. That's what the people of the world have, they just have the way to live in this life that man has put on record from age to age to age to age. "If you want this in life, if you want prosperity, do it this way. If you want health, do it this way. If you want happiness, do it this way." Everyone has their ideas for those things. We all have them, but Paul says there's an opposition to those things and it's called godliness.

And he says in verse 8, "For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things," now listen to what it is, "having promise of the life that now is." Do you have a promise in your life that now is? And of that which is to come? This life that we have, that we live here today on earth if Christ be in you, is the firstfruits of heaven. It is the firstfruits of eternal life. It is that down payment, so to speak, as the Lord reveals himself as salvation in this life. And as he comes with great power to rescue us from sin and to rescue us from the bad attitude and to rescue us from the fallen nature that we have, that is a revelation of what heaven will be. That is what Christ in his totality in unbroken communion is.

But Paul says, "the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." "And this is life eternal," John wrote, "that they might know me, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Christ is life. Paul said it in Philippians 1:21, he said, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." None of us are walking around saying to die is gain. What gain could he possibly be talking about but the eternal life that he has had glimpses of here in this life? And he yearns to have it in the one to come, the unbroken, the place where there's no sin, the place where he sees his Lord continuously without any interruption from sin or the brokenness of our bodies or the things that afflict us here.

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." John said in 1 John 2:25, he said, "this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life." And in 5:12 he said, "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Godliness is the life of the Son of God in your soul. It's not any kind of creed. It's not any kind of duty. It's not a moral code and it's not the 10 Commandments. It's the life of Christ in the soul of the believer. It's the revelation of what Christ has done for his people. It is the finished work of Christ worked out in the soul of his people to reveal his presence in you.

Now let's turn just a page over to 1 Timothy 6. I said I kind of confined myself this morning to just the times that he wrote to Timothy about this word "godliness." 1 Timothy 6, let's begin in verse 3. This is after he has told him about the relationships and how the Lord is superior over all of them and how the things that he told Timothy to teach and exhort the people. Verse 3 he says, "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ," do you see that? That's godliness. "The words of our Lord Jesus Christ." Not the creeds of man. Not the things hanging in churches. Not the 10 Commandments. Not the things that man has contrived to have a relationship with God.

Verse 3, "even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness." There it is, the doctrine that's according to godliness which is what he just told us, the words of Christ.

"He is proud, knowing nothing," this is the form of godliness, this is what we're talking about. "He is proud, knowing nothing but dotting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself." From such withdraw thyself. That's the second warning in Timothy's letter.

But look at verse 6, "But godliness with contentment is great gain." Godliness with contentment. What is it that we're content with? It's what we've been talking about all morning, it's the finished work of Christ. Godliness with contentment is where there's gain in this life. Everybody wants to know what the happiness of this world is. Everybody wants to know what the secret of life is. Everybody wants to know what the meaning of life is. And Paul tells us, "godliness with contentment is great gain." Godliness, the words of Christ, the life of Christ is great gain. He's already told us that "to live is Christ and to die is gain." He was caught up and enamored with the life of Christ.

Now look down to verse 11 for he tells him, "But thou, O man of God, flee these things," flee all of these things that have been mentioned, "and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." Two of those, righteousness, the righteousness of Christ and godliness are not fruit of the Spirit. The rest of them are. Right here in the middle, "follow after righteousness, after godliness." He has defined what godliness is and it's the life of Christ in the soul.

May the Lord enable us today and empower us today to follow after godliness, to be content with what godliness is. Not the form but the power. And what is the definition of the two? How do we tell the difference? The form leads to self. The form leads to man's religion and it denies the power of Christ. But true godliness is Christ. True godliness is the life of Christ in the soul.

Now let's go back to our text in 2 Timothy. We're going to read down a little bit more. Verse 5, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." Now look at verse 7. We get more of that form of godliness. "Ever learning." Oh,

that's good, isn't it? To be ever learning? Don't we all want to be ever learning? Yes, we do at the feet of Christ. But what is the difference to learning at the feet of Christ and learning at the feet of man? Well, we're told one is the form and one is the truth.

Verse 7 says, "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." Always learning and never, that's a sad statement, isn't it? Always learning but never coming to the knowledge, never able to come. You can't get there on your own. But man hasn't learned that because you can't learn it in a seminary and you can't learn it in a school and you can't even learn it in life. They must all be taught of him. They must all be taught at the feet of Christ.

"Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." And then Paul tells us again another example of religious men, Jannes and Jambres, who back when Moses would throw down his serpent and then they would throw down their serpents, they were Egyptian magicians. Why is it that he compares religious man today to magicians? Because they all have the power of the wicked one. They all have the spirit of the wicked one. "Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was."

Now listen to verse 10 through 12. Paul now is going to tell Timothy and to share with Timothy what his life has been, the life of the godliness that the Lord has given him. Listen to him, "But thou hast fully known my doctrine," he has explained to him now in two letters that his life is Christ, that godliness is Christ, that there is a form to be very wary, be on the look-out, know that is a great danger to your soul.

"But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me." Out of them all the Lord delivered me. That's the life of godliness for the child of God. The Lord raises up the affliction and he delivers the child of God out of them. The Lord raises up the persecution and he delivers the child of God out of it. Why? Have you ever sat and wondered why? I hope by now you've been taught why, that we may depend upon him and him alone and not to be here to depend upon ourselves or a form of godliness or a religious duty or a religious ordinance or a law or anything else that man has contrived a way of salvation to.

Oh, may the Lord search us this morning. May he reveal to us his love for our soul, his presence in our soul, and that he alone is godliness, he alone is life, he alone is eternal life, he alone is a deliverer for the child of God and persecution and affliction, whatever it is.

I shared this last night with my children as I've had a very sick home this week and I'll end this today with the same verse in 2 Corinthians 12:9, "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Do you notice that? The Lord's strength is made perfect in what? Our strength? No, as he humbles the child of

God and he reveals himself to the child of God, he reveals the truth and his sufficiency in his soul.

"Most gladly," and I love this part of it, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities," and that's what Paul just wrote, "I've had a life of afflictions, I've had a life of infirmities and I glory in it." Not that they were hard in his life. Not that they were a badge to him but he tells us why, "that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

I hope as you go through the afflictions that the Lord brings and as you go through the persecutions and as you go through the tough times in this life, that the power of Christ is rest upon you to bring you through them, to reveal himself in them, and to reveal to you every day of your life your need for his applied salvation, for his presence in your life. As the Lord has been faithful in 2016 to his people, we know he'll be faithful again this year and that our Lord changes not, to whom be all glory, all honor, all exaltation, for he truly is worthy, he truly is godliness and may he in his power turn us away from any form that we may flee from.

The text one more time, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."

Dear heavenly Father, may you add thy power and thy clarity to the souls of thy people this hour. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.