

THE REAL THING

INTRODUCTION

Many years ago in 1972, the Coca Cola company had this slogan for Coke, "It's the real thing". Through the years, different soft drink makers tried to copy the taste of Coke, but there is still only one true Coca Cola taste, and when you taste an ice-cold Coke on a hot day then you know you're having "the real thing".

True, uncompromised Christianity is exactly the same. Over the years, the enemy has infiltrated churches, religious organisations and people, deceiving them into a form of Christianity that's not the real thing. From the outside it may look right, but when you dig down past the outer appearance you find people doing strange things that are not in line with the Bible.

Paul warned Timothy about that. There were false teachers who were deceiving the people and he instructed Timothy to have nothing to do with them.

I believe the Lord wants us to be aware of the dangerous trap of the enemy who wants to remove the power of godliness from God's people so this morning we will look at two questions:

1. What does "having a form of godliness but denying its power" look like?
2. What is the power of godliness and how can we be sure that we have it?

MESSAGE

2 Timothy 3:2-5 (NKJV) But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 **having a form of godliness but denying its power**. And from such people turn away!

Paul states that the people who are involved in these kinds of sins have a form of godliness but deny its power. The word "form" can be translated "**appearance**." These people appear to be godly, but they do not allow true Christianity to have a powerful influence in their lives.

The tragic truth here is that Paul here is not speaking about people outside the church, he is speaking about those who appear to be Christians!

WHAT DOES HAVING A FORM OF GODLINESS LOOK LIKE?

This refers to a mere external show of religion, pretending great godliness and holiness, being outwardly righteous before men, wearing the hypocrites mask

which makes one look godly, but underneath there is sin and compromise and unbelief.

Jesus defined this “form of godliness” perfectly when He spoke out against the scribes and pharisees in **Matthew 23**. The whole chapter contains “woe statements” by Jesus against them. In **Matthew 23:27**, He says, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. 28 Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”

A good example is found in Acts 5:1-11. Ananias and Sapphira had the appearance of godliness in wanting to give to the church, yet they were actually dishonest. If they had allowed the powerful influence of godliness to work in their lives, they would not have been dishonest.

The Bible teaches that **we will be known by our fruit**. People with a form of godliness bear this fruit: “lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God”

We need to check our own fruit against Paul’s list. For example, “Am I a lover of self, and everything in my life is revolving around me, myself and I? Am I a lover of money? Do I prefer spending time on pleasurable activities to spending time with God?”

Praise the Lord, there is grace and mercy. Our God will forgive and restore us if we will repent and turn from our godlessness.

CAN WE DEFINE TRUE OR REAL GODLINESS?

If it is possible to deny the power of godliness, then it’s also possible to live in the power of Godliness!

Godliness means “God-likeness”. In my mind means following Jesus and reflecting His character. It is linked to holiness. A godly person does not just live a meaningless life of blindly following a set of rules, no, a godly person reflects Christ in every action, longing to do what is right before God, with the goal of pleasing Him. The very foundation of living a godly life is having a relationship with Jesus. True godliness is living out our inner faith and relationship with Jesus.

I found this description of Godliness in an article in “Truth Magazine” : *A godly man sets God always before him; the thought of God controls his whole life; his effort to do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, to live unto the Lord, to seek his glory only. This holy reverence for the felt presence of God can only be maintained in the life of faith and self-control; in the worldly life of*

mere pleasure and business it cannot flourish. God is the center of the devout life, the life of godliness

We need to ask ourselves this question, "does my life bear the fruit of true godliness? Am I striving every day to be more like Jesus, or is a true life-giving relationship with Jesus absent from my life?"

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

The first key to experiencing the power of godliness is to believe and receive the Gospel of Christ. Paul wrote this:

Romans 1:16 (NKJV) For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

The Gospel is God's power to save us. Good works won't save us, our parents won't save us, our denomination can't save us, an outward display of religiousness won't save us. Only by surrendering to the message of the Gospel and receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour can we be saved. This salvation is through grace and by faith.

We receive this salvation by believing the Gospel message, the message about Jesus Christ who came in the form of a man, lived among us, was crucified for our sins and rose on the third day. He is now seated at the right hand of the Father in Heaven and intercedes for us.

Religion without a true relationship with Jesus will always be a form of godliness that denies its power. Religion without power is dead religion. It is the legalistic following of a set of rules combined with self-righteousness without partaking of the grace of God in a true experience of being born-again.

But when we surrender our lives to Jesus, the power of the Gospel is released in our life through the Holy Spirit. He takes residence in our lives, bringing life to our spirit and enabling us to walk in true godliness.

John 14:16-17 (NKJV) "If you love Me, keep My commandments. 16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

We can only receive the Holy Spirit by being born-again. From that very moment onward, we have all the help we need to enable us to walk in true godliness, and we will experience the power of godliness.

Have you received this power of the Gospel? Today is your opportunity!

THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

There is another step. We must be born again by faith, but then out of our faith works must come works.

James 2:14-17 What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? 17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead religion.

The Gospel is the power that changed us, but we also need power so that we can do the work that God has called us to do. To enable us to walk in the true power of godliness, we need to be baptised in the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:8 (NKJV) But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

- The power of the Holy Spirit needs to be evident in our lives.
- The power of the Holy Spirit enables us to be true witnesses.
- The power of the Holy Spirit within us will help us not to fall into the trap of simply having a form of godliness.

Have you been baptised in the Holy Spirit? Is His power present in you? Have you been witnessing because of the power that grants us ability to do so?

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A GODLY LIFE

After warning Timothy, about those that operate in a form of godliness, Paul listed some of the characteristics of the true godly life:

2 Timothy 3:2-5 (NKJV) But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, 11 persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.

The power of true godliness is present when:

- We carefully follow true biblical doctrine.
- We live according to Christ's example.
- We walk in faith, longsuffering (patience), love and perseverance.
- We endure persecutions and afflictions in true faith, confidently knowing that the Lord is able to deliver us out of them all.
- And may I also add that it is present when we bear all the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

What about us? Are these characteristics of the godly life present in us?

CONCLUSION

As we approach Pentecost where we focus on the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church, let us assess our lives to ensure His power is present in us. Let us walk in holiness and display true godliness and all the power that comes with it.

The power of godliness comes from two places:

1. The outworking of the power of the Gospel in our lives.
2. The power of the Holy Spirit in our lives which is received when we are baptized in the Holy Spirit.

We don't want a form of godliness, we want "the real thing". Let us be careful not to fall into sinful behaviour that will rob us of the true, life-changing power of godliness. Rather let us ask the Lord to grant us have heart faith that will produce good works empowered by the Holy Spirit so that no-one can deny the true power of godliness present in our lives.