

S E R M O N IV.

The DANGER of RESTING on a FORM of
GODLINESS, without the POWER thereof.

2 TIMOTHY iii. 5.

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

TH E R E is nothing of greater moment, concern, and consequence to men and women, then to know distinctly, to be well acquainted with, and to be thoroughly serious in the practice of godliness, *For godliness is great gain, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come* : And yet, alas ! there is not any thing wherein the greatest part of them are more miserably mistaken ; some, and these not a few, so very grossly mistake it, that they utterly undervalue and despise it, seeing no excellency, nor worth in it, why they should either prize, or pursue after it, whereby it comes to pass, that they are so far from making any near and close approaches to the practice and power thereof, that they do not so much as care for the form of it : There are a great many others, who, though they pretend, and make profession of some regard for godliness, yet deplorably, and no less dangerously mistake the nature of it, which makes them to halve and counterfeit it, and to fit down with the form, whilst they deny the power of it. Amongst many evils of the last times, which the apostle would have Christians forwarned of, armed and guarded against, this is one, and a very considerable one, that shall be found to halve, personate, and counterfeit godliness, to take up the form, and practically to deny the power thereof : Nay, it is his great scope here, to shew that godliness may, and will be thus wofully mistaken, and to guard believers against all such mistakes of it.

He proposeth this matter by way of prophecy and prediction, that *in the last days perillous times shall come* : Insinuating thereby, that the nearer those last days draw to an end, these words will have their more full, direct, and clear ac-

days, and yet yet notwithstanding this is a prophecy of evils that were then to come : But you will then demand, what are these perilous times, or what is it that makes them perilous ? I answer, it is not outward trouble and persecution so much, that makes them so, though that will not be wanting ; a- it is the great abounding of iniquity amongst professing Christians : The fountain of all those evils and abominations, mentioned here by the apostle, to come to pass in the last days is discovered, *men shall be lovers of their own-selves* ; and then, as so many foul streams, that flow from this corrupt and unclean fountain, *They shall be covetous boasters, proud, blasphemous, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of them that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.* And yet this is very strange, and been stupendious, and makes the peril the greater, that men shall endeavour to veil and cover, to palliate, and plaister over, and to honest, as it were, all these detestable evils, and abominable villanies, with a form of godliness, when in the mean time, they palpably thus deny the power thereof. There is a word of warning subjoined, *from such turn away*, from such as under the mask and vizard of godliness, follow their own particular and selfish designs, and under the specious pretext of love to God, and his people are in effect only lovers of their own-selves.

If any will ask, as some very readily will, how can such gross evils possibly consist with a form of godliness ? I answer, 1st, That a form of godliness is taken here in a very large sense, taking in all that pretends any the least, and most remote regard, or relation to Christ, with which all, or most of these evils may some way consist. 2^{dly}, These evils are not practised, but under the pretext of some good, or in order to the furthering of some really, or seeming good, and honest design. 3^{dly}, Though these evils be gross and abominable in the sight of God, yet they are such as may consist with a form of godliness, in the sight of most men ; such persons may have a form of godliness in that respect, and yet be lovers of themselves, proud, boasters, heady, high-minded, &c. It is therefore not so great a wonder, that the apostle supposeth such to ly latent and lurking under a form and shew of godliness, so as they make the times perilous, and make it somewhat difficult to discern, and discover them.

Several things might be pertinently observed from the context, as namely, 1. That there is nothing more perilous

to the people of God, then when sinful and selfish designs, and practices come clothed with a shew, and pretext of godliness, when deformation comes under the cloak of reformation.

2dly, That Satan will mightily bestir himself in the last days, to bring this great perril on the church of God.

3dly, That there may a great many gross evils, lurk under the specious pretext of religion, and godliness; there may be a fair shew of godliness, and yet a great deal of self-love, pride, headiness, high-mindedness, covetousness, &c. latent under it.

But not insisting in these, we come close to the words of our text, wherein, 1st, We have some thing conceded, or granted, as to these men, *viz* That *they have a form of godliness*, that they have the outside or external part, the shape likeness, or similitude of godliness, the external profession, and outward form of it; They may read the scripture, hearteh word preached, pray, confer on a spiritual subject, &c. Though they be altogether void of the truth of religion, and of the power of godliness, they may have the form and appearance of it, something that looks like it, and hath some resemblance of it; as fairing, and paint looks like native beauty, and gilding like true gold, so halved, false, and hypocritical religion, may look somewhat like to that which is true, real and sincere. 2dly, We have somewhat denied concerning them, and that is the power of Godliness; which they are destitute of, *But denying the power thereof*, as the apostle speaks of that sort of men, Tit. i. 16, *They profess that they know God, but in works do deny him*: In word they confess him, but in practice they deny him; they (as I said) have the shew, and counterfeit of religion, something looking like it, but are utterly without the power of it, so that their practice declares them, notwithstanding their profession, to be deniers of it.

The first point of doctrine that we draw from the words, is, *That where real and true godliness is, it hath always power with it*: For clearing whereof, we would speak a little to these two, 1st, What is meant by *the power of godliness*. 2dly, Somewhat towards the proof and confirmation of the doctrine: To which I shall only premit these two words, 1st, That we take it fore-granted, that there is an external part, or form of religion and an inward power. 3dly, That there is a false, counterfeit and empty shew of religion, or godliness, commonly called hypocrisy, dissembling, and deceitful dealing with God, condemned in the Scribes and Pharisees, and others; and a real true godliness, that is not only a shew but also substance, not profession and form only, but also power, which is the main and principle thing therein, for the

want whereof, these hypocrites are here noted, and condemned, notwithstanding their having had the form thereof *First*, Then, by power, we understand these two, *1st*, A power of dominion and command; and thus real godliness hath a power to rule sway, and command a man; power is so taken, 1 Cor. vi. 12. When the apostle says, *All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any thing*; to be under the power of any thing, is to be under its dominion and command; so to be under the power of sin, is to be captivated by it, to have it for a master, and to be ruled and commanded by it; even so, to be under the power of godliness, is to be under its dominion, so that it sways, orders, directs, rules and commands the man; *Know ye not*, (saith the apostle, Rom. vi. 16.) *to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants are ye, to whom ye obey, whether it be of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?* That which is there called *obedience to righteousness*, is here called *godliness*; so that to be under the power of godliness, is heartily to obey it, to be obedient to the doctrine of the gospel, to *the truth which is after godliness*, as it is called, Tit. i. 1) and that *from the very heart*, ver. 17 and 19. *2dly*, By power we mean efficacy, so that true godliness hath an efficacy to enable to perform, and make practicable what it enjoins and commands; thus says the apostle, 1 Cor. ii. 4. *My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of mens wisdom, But in demonstration of the spirit, and of power*; and 1 Cor. iv. 20. *The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power*; Where there is power, there is efficacy; there is an effectualness, through the power of God that accompanieth, when the Lord pleaseth the preaching of the gospel; and as in preaching, some men may have flourishing expressions without efficacy, whilst others may have a more rude and unpolished stile of language, yet with a great deal of more life power and efficacy: So there is a form of godliness, that never effectually shews itself in practise, or in the mortification of any lust; but where true godliness is, it commands, exerciseth dominion, and reigns over a man, it directs and commands him, and he gives willing and hearty obedience to it: It not only brings him under the profession of religion, and makes him to adorn that profession, by a visible good conversation, but it works him inwardly at the heart, and hath an efficacy in it, to the subduing of sin in him.

As for the second thing proposed to be spoken to, *viz.* The proof and confirmation of the doctrine, *That where true godliness is, it hath power with it*: I shall only pitch on these two reasons, for proving of it; The first whereof is, *That*
where

where true godliness is, there the Spirit is, and where the Spirit is, there is power; *God hath not* (says the apostle, 2 Tim. i. 7.) *given us, the spirit of fear, but of love, of power, and of a sound mind*; The spirit brings along with him, power, inward life and efficacy; 2dly, Where true godliness is there is faith, and faith hath power with it; there is an exceeding greatness of mighty power, that worketh effectually in them that believe, Ephes. i. 19. Faith hath a power in it, enabling to overcome the world, 1 John iii. 4. It hath a power to purify the heart, Acts xv. 9. Yea, all things are possible to him that believeth, Mark ix. 22. Faith hath (if I may so speak) an instrumental omnipotency taking hold of, and closing with the almighty power of God, it removeth, and hurleth out of the way, the greatest and highest mountains of difficulty that stand before it, and maketh them, as it were, become a plain; so that the believer, when lively, and vigorous in the exercise of his faith, on the Lord Jesus, that strong one, on whom his help is laid, may humbly say with the apostle, Phil. iv. 13. *I can do all things, thro' Christ strengthning me, though I can of myself, and without him do nothing*; The strength of Christ improved by it, makes it wonderfully powerful.

The use of it serves for trial; would ye know then, whether ye have true godliness in very deed, here is a notable mark and evidence of it; for it is not every one that pretends to godliness, that really hath it; but where it is in truth, it hath power with it, even a manifold power. 1st, It hath a *convincing* power, that where the hearts of men and women are naturally proud, and stout against God, and have a kind of skurf on them, godliness sets an edge on the word, and makes it pierce deeply, and stricks through, it fixeth convictions, and makes them sink, and the person to take kindly with them, bringing his heart under deep impresses of the awe and dread of God. 2dly, It hath a *renewing*, changing and transforming power, such a power, that makes a new creature, old things to pass away, and all things to become new, as the apostle speaks, 2 Cor. v. 17. 3dly, It hath a *restraining* power, it keeps in (to say so) the horns of corruptions, and lusts, and suffers them not to reign, and exercise dominion, as they had wont to do, Rom. vi. 14. 4thly, It hath a *constraining* power, impelling, and pushing forward to that which is good, and well-pleasing in the sight of God, it is impossible where godliness is in power, that men can be unconcerned in their duty; it makes them yield themselves to be servants unto righteousness, as it is, Rom. vi. It leads captive high thoughts, and imaginations to the obedience of Christ

Christ, 2 Cor. x. 25. It makes the man that he dare not, he will not, he cannot avowedly, at least, resist any commanded duty, no more then he dare, or can dwell contentedly with, any known sin, it makes him, that as he dare not put away any of God's commandments from him, so neither dare he regard any iniquity in his heart, Psal. xviii. 12. and Psal. lxvi. 18.

5thly, It hath a mortifying power, as to all things whatsoever, without exception, that offer to compete, and rival it with precious Jesus Christ in the persons esteem, it blackens and demps the beauty and splendor of them all in this competition, it detrudes them to the very lowest degree of baseness, and vileness, so that in comparison of him, they are solidly reckoned to be but as loss and dung; Thus the apostle expresth himself, Phil. iii. *These things that were gain to me, I counted loss for Christ; yea doubtless, I count all things to be but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, &c.* It breaks off the contentment (such as it was) and complacency in idols, that sometimes men had, and makes them, in holy indignation, to say, *What have we to do any more with idols? get you hence.*

6thly, It hath a heart quieting, calming, composing, and fixing power, which the meer form of godliness never hath but leavesthe man still reeling and unfixed; *It is a good thing* (saith the apostle, Heb. 13.) *that the heart be established with grace, not with meats;* grace that is opposed to meats, that is to questions and debates about meats, and other such things, that have a shew of godliness, and do not profit these who are occupied about them; grace, I say, only establisheth the heart. If we could be prevailed with, to lay ourselves to this rule, and to examine our godliness, according to these evidences, it would be found that there is but little true godliness amongst us; ah, where is the power of godliness! and yet wherever true godliness is, it hath power with it; and this is of very large extent, reaching a mans frame and walk, his thoughts words and actions, yea his very looks some way, it made Job to make a covenant with his eyes; it orders all, and that not by fits, and at starts; but constantly, as to his desire, design, and honest endeavour, in some measure; and if at any time, the influence of its power be not felt, or weakned, that becomes his burden and affliction, when, in any, the least measure at himself.

The second point of doctrine, from the words, is, *As there is real godliness that hath power, so there is a form and hypocritical shew of godliness without the power, life and substance thereof, under which form and shew, persons may go a very great length:* The current of the scriptures, and the

doleful experience of many, who make themselves to be godly, when yet they are nothing really so, abundantly prove this, and put it beyond all reach of rational contradiction, or debate; how many, alas! are like to whited tombs, and painted sepulchres, like to these spoken of, Psal. lxxviii. 30. Who flatter God with their lips, and lie unto him with their tongues, their hearts not being right with God, nor stedfast in his covenant? I say, persons may, under the form, shew and appearance of godliness, without the power of it, go a very great, even an astonishing length; which may be reduced to these eight, or nine steps, or heads. 1. As to profession. 2. As to gifts. 3. As to a blameless outward conversation, in a good measure. 4. As to external duties of religion. 5. As to a name, and good account amongst the godly, founded in a great part upon the four former, and resulting from them. 6. As to some inward work on their spirits. 7. As to the appearance, and resemblance of the sanctifying, and saving graces of the Spirit. 8. As to suffering, in a suffering time. 9. As to dying in a sort of peace, and assurance of their salvation, but ill-grounded.

First, As to profession, They may have a very fair, florid, lustering and splendid one, even a lamp of it, shining a long time, it may be to their very dying day, as the foolish virgins spoken of, Math. xxv. Who associated with the wise ones, were undiscovered to be without the oil of true grace, by their fellow professors, till the coming of the Bridegroom, made the unexpected and surprizing discovery.

Secondly, As to gifts, they may have a good measure of literal and speculative knowledge of God, of Christ, and of other principles of religion, and mysteries of the kingdom of God, as these spoken of, 2 Pet. ii. 20. No doubt had; as the false apostles mentioned, 2 Cor. xi. Had, who in that respect, looked like *angels of light*, and as the *ministers of Christ*; as these teachers had, who vayed with the great apostle Paul himself in preaching, and out of envy study to out-shine him, spoken of, Phil. i. As several of the Jews; mentioned, Rom. ii. 18, 19 20 had, *Who had a form of knowledge of the truth of the law*, A formed idea, and system of the truths feattered up and down the law, collected, as it were, in one body, who *knew God's will and approved*, or *differenced things that are excellent*, being *instructed out of the law*, as these illuminates, spoken of, Heb. vi doubtless, in a great measure had; and as the apostle supposeth, professors of religion may have, who yet are without a principle of true gracious love to God, and to the truths which they profess the belief of, 1 Cor xiii. The know-

knowledge of such is not lively, spiritually experimental, humbling, transforming, and truly practical. They may have a notable gift of utterance, and expressing their knowledge, and conceptions of the truths which they know, for the edification of others, as these Jews had of the law, (and others may proportionably have of the gospel) *Who were instructors of the foolish, and teachers of babes*, of such as were far inferior to themselves in these things; and, as these had whom the apostle supposeth to speak, as it were, *with the tongues of men, and of angels*, that is, eloquently elegantly and excellently. They may have (which is of great affinity with, and a branch of the former) a choice gift of conference on spiritual purposes, to the edification of others as no doubt, these same persons had. They may have a great gift of prayer, as Judas no doubt had, and of preaching also, and as many other graceless persons have been known to have had; For there is a gift, as well as the grace of prayer, a meer gift, as well as the gracious exercise of a gift; O! how pathetically will some men pray, and seem to soar and mount aloft to heaven in prayer, in the exercise of a meer gift, unsanctified from common assistance, and by a pair of wings, made only of self: Such are great strangers to the experimental knowledge, of the soul-humbling, and abasing straitnings, and of the soul-refreshing liberty, proceeding from the absence, and partial with drawment, and from the special presence and assistance of the spirit of grace and supplications, wherewith the truly godly, who pray from the grace of the Spirit, are acquainted with, whereof the apostle speaks in the name of the godly, Rom. viii. 26. *Likewise the spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what to pray for as we ought, but the spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings, that cannot be uttered*: They are great strangers to the observing of the absence of the Spirit of grace, and to soul-trouble, even when, in the more ready, easy, and plausible exercise of a common gift: They are great strangers to praying in the Holy Ghost, and in the name of Christ, in conscientious obedience to his command, in his strength, with predominant respect to his glory, and with a believing look to his meditation, to his satisfaction, and intercession, as the great ground of the acceptation of their persons and prayers, even their best said prayers: They are great strangers to the exercise of kindly sorrow, and humiliation, for grieving the spirit of grace and supplications by their self-seeking, in prayer, and in the exercise of a gift; Finally they are great strangers to looking at liberty, to interceed with God in prayer for themselves, as the rebounding (to speak so) of Christ's intercession for them; and when they cannot interceed for them-

elves as they ought, but are under bonds; to being eased and refreshed from the believing consideration of his intercession for them; These and such other gifts, as they may be in a greater measure, in some that have only a form of godliness, then they are in many of the truly godly, so where they are, they are very pleasing and tickling to the persons themselves, and not a little taking with others: And meer gifts, without sanctifying grace, very readily, and ordinarily puff up as the apostle speaks of knowledge, 1 Cor. viii. 1. And the greater they be, they puff up the more.

Thirdly, As to the external duties of religion, and of the worship of God, both ordinary and extraordinary, they may go about them, they may pray in secret, and in their families, they may read the scriptures, wait punctually on the ordinances, in the house, in the streets, and in the wilderness, as many in the gospel say to the Lord, they did; they may externally sanctify the Sabbath, they may fast often, even twice a week, as the Pharisee saith he did, Luke xviii. And many of these, they may go about, with a moral seriousness, as they did, who are said, Psal. lxxviii. 34. *To have returned, and enquired early after God*, That is diligently, and somewhat seriously, and concernedly; Nay, they may have some tickling pleasure, and delight in them, as these are said to have had, in approaching to God, Isa. lviii. 2.

Fourthly, As to their visible conversation; it may be in a good measure blameless, as Paul says his was, while a Jew, and before his conversion, Phil. iii. 6. As the Pharisees were, who, as to their outward conversation were, as whitened sepulchres and painted tombs, very fair, fine and beautiful to look to. Matth. xxiii. 27. And as these were, of whom the apostle Peter speaks, Eph. ii. 20. *Who had escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ*; On whom, as to the cleansing of their outward conversation, and their escaping of the external acts of lusts, though still alive, and unsubdued in their hearts, the knowledge of Christ hath prevailed, and also to the making of them, (as it is, ver. 18.) *clean to escape from them who live in error*, from their blasphemous opinions, and gross practices, into a profession of the truth, and a suitableness of outward conversation thereunto; whilst in the mean time there was no inward saving change, made on the heart, from the love of secret lusts, to the sincere love of Christ, and of his truth: The former of which, without the latter may be occasioned, by the bright shining light, spiritual state and majesty of the truth, which is in nothing contrary to nature's light, however it may in several things transcend its reach; by the commending beauty, and loveliness of holiness, radiantly,

diantly shining in the conversation of some of its professors; by the convincing power of the example of more serious and tender Christians; and by some external conveniencies, and advantages that sometimes, though not often nor ordinary attend a profession of truth, and holiness, which when they are wanting, plead for the greater charity to them, who are remarkably changed to the better, in their practise and conversation, when there is little external encouragement, few, or no outward advantages, yea, when on the contrary, there are many outward discouragements, and prejudices, attending the zealous profession of the truth, according to godliuefs.

Fifthly, As to a great name, an high esteem and repute among others, on account of such a profession, of such gifts, of such duties of religion, and of such a conversation; as the ministers and members of the church of Sardis, Rev. iii 2. *Had a name to live*, some of whom, at least whatever others might be, were quite dead; they had a great name in the other churches, probably on the fore-mentioned accounts, that they were not only living, but also lively Christians, but very unsuitable to so large a name, Christ pronouncing them to be dead, some of them (as I said) to be altogether dead, and others of them not to be lively; such readily seek after a name of religion, and when they have got it, are satisfied with, and sit down on it, without suitable seriousness in looking after the thing, though a name, an empty name of religion, be but a poor and pitiful business: What though men and women have the largest testimonial drawn up, in the most ample form, and subscribed by the hands of all the most eminent, godly and discerning ministers, and private Christians of the city, or countrey-side wherein they live, what will it signify, or avail, if Christ's hand be not at it, or if he shall subscribe after all their subscriptions, a plain contradiction to, and a down-right denial of what they affirm? His judgement and testimony being infallible, and always according to truth, will weaken and quite enervate the contrary testimony of all the world; *It is a small thing* (as the apostle says, 1 Cor. iv.) *to be judged of men*, This way, or that way, by a judgment of approbation, or of condemnation, since we cannot simply stand by the one, nor fall by the other, neither can the one help us, if he condemn, nor the other hurt us, if he approve; every one must stand or fall eternally, according to Christ's testimony) *not be that commends himself* (by proportion, nor he whom others commend) *but he whom God commends is approved*, It is true, we ought to be tender of our

own good name, which is better than precious ointment; and to endeavour, to commend ourselves to every mans conscience in the sight of God; and to look carefully, that by our unchristian carriage, we bring not any stain, or blot on the profession of his precious name, nor give any the least occasion to the adversary, to blaspheme or speak evil; yet it is as true, that we should do none of these things mainly, if at all, on design to gain a name to ourselves, but in order to the glorifying of God, the adorning of the doctrine of the gospel, and the convincing, gaining and edifying of others; we ought not to hunt after a name, nor to commend ourselves to the good word of others; rather then to their consciences: Alas! there hath been, and still is, too much affecting, and seeking after a name, amongst the Christians of this greatly self-seeking generation; we are too well pleased, too much tickled; and taken with it, when we get it, and too much troubled when we want it, and often in our distempers, more than we are with the want, or with a very great want of the thing, and substance of religion it self. Happy are they, who make it their great business to approve themselves to God, and to commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God, yet so, as to be denied, and deaded to every mans commendation, and good word; that are well satisfied, to be found in the way to heaven, though the sound of their feet should not be much heard by the way; that love to lurk, and hide, but when they are called to appear, and shew themselves, resembling hereby, in a great measure, blessed Jesus, of whom we ought to be followers, as dear children, and of whom it is said, that *He did not cry, neither was his voice heard in the streets*, he loved not to make noise; and to whom a name of religion is a burden, and affliction, when they judge the inward exercise of their souls, and the tenderness of their walk before God, doth not carry a just proportion to that name; and when the lining, (to speak so) and the inner half, is not fully as broad as the outer-half. There is also too great a readiness, and easiness, rashly to give large names to others, by our superlative, and hyperbolick testimonies, and commendations, whereby many are not a little hurt, and prejudged; as several of the Christians of the church of Sardis, very probably were, being thereby tempted to think too well of themselves, and someway to sit down on their great name, without suitable seeking after the thing, or much of it; and this we often do (to say so) for as good again, tho', it may be not so designedly, and directly, yet on the matter that commending of others, they may commend us, and that

that their commendation of us, may have the more weight. O! when shall we once look more seriously and concernedly after real religion and godliness, and be less concerned, and more holily indifferent, as to the name? When shall our movings about, and our appearings in, and for religion be the native and necessary, the kindly and unconstrained results of the power of the life of the grace of God within?

Sixthly, As to somewhat of an internal work upon their spirits. 1. There may be some jealousies, fears and doubts about their salvation, and eternal state, putting on to propose questions concerning the same, and that not merely for the fashion, or in way of complement, though these fears are often suffered to vanish, and these doubts and questions to ly without a thoroughly satisfying answer, and resolution; as it was with the young man mentioned in the gospel, who came to Christ, and asked, *Good master, what shall I do to be saved, and to inherit eternal life?* and *what lacke I yet?* And who was very sad at the answer Christ gave, and at the duty he enjoined him; there having been a considerable struggle betwixt some lothness to leave Christ, and great lothness to leave the world, but domining love to the world, carrying it in the competition, away he goes and leaves his case of conscience in the hollow. 2dly, There may be a good measure of illumination, even supernatural, though not by a common work of the Spirit, not at all sanctifying, as was in these spoken of, Heb. vi. 3dly, There may be conviction of sin, and that considerably deep, as was in Judas. 4thly, There may be some terror, and horror of conscience, accompanying or flowing from that conviction, and from the apprehensions of judgment, and wrath to come, as was in Felix, though but a Pagan, and without a form of godliness, and may be much more so in visible church-members, and no doubt was in Judas, when in despair, he became *felo de se*, and his own executioner; and how many such dreadful fits of horror have seized on, even most profane, dissolute, and profligate persons, who have oftner than once, drunk and deboshed them away: But ah! poor wretches, they will recurr and come back again, with redoubled irresistible force and violence. 5thly, There may be some sort of sorrow, and remorse for sin, as highly dangerous to themselves, as was in Saul, Judas, and others such. 6thly, There may be a considerable firm assent of the judgment to scripture truths; which temporary faith necessarily presupposeth; nay, very Devils themselves, have it, beyond many men living, under gospel-ordinances, and cannot withhold it. 7thly There may be considerable stir-

rings, and ticklings of affections, in strange fits and flashes of joy, at hearing, and some way receiving of the word as in these, in the parable of the sower, who received the word with joy, and believed for a time; and there may, no doubt (as experience confirms) be proportionably fits of sadness, heaviness, and weeping, at hearing of the word, and both may be without any saving or sanctifying work, the hardness, and stoniness of the heart remaining still untaken away. *8thly*, They may have some slight, light, transient and evanishing gusts, and tastings of *the good work of God, of the heavenly gift, and of the powers of the life to come*: As these are supposed to have, Heb. vi. With some faint and languid desires to die the death of the righteous, and to have their end like theirs, without any cordial and sincere love to the way leading to that end, as Balaam had. *9thly*, There may be considerable striving and struggling betwixt the illightned conscience, and the corrupt affections, the one saying, the one should follow Christ and religion, and the other saying, he must not leave the world nor abandon this and the other lust; where the corrupt affections carry it, though not always without some reluctance, and this may look very like, and pass under the construction of that spiritual combat that is in the regenerate, betwixt the flesh and the spirit, the renewed, and unrenewed part, though it be in many respects, vastly different therefrom. *10thly*, There may be a sort of tickling and evanishing delight in attendance on ordinances, as was in these mentioned, Isa. lviii. 2. and Ezek xxxviii. 31, 32.

Seventhly, As to the appearance, and resemblance of the saving graces of the Spirit of God; whereof there are but few, it any, which may not be personated by men and women, having only a form of godliness, and who are close and latent hypocrites: As for instance, *1st*, The grace of faith, may be personated, as it is by the temporary believer who hears the word with joy, and believes for a season; (which is not so to be understood, as if temporary faith differed nothing from true justifying, and saving faith, but only, as to duration, they differ certainly in kind, as might be made easily to appear;) so they are said to believe, Psal. lxxviii. 35. and Psal. cv. 12. Whose heart was not right with God, and who did what is not consistent with saving faith. *2dly*, Love to God and Christ, and to fellowship with him, may be personed, as may be gathered from, Ephes. vi. 24. and from Isa. lviii. 2. *3dly*, The hope of heaven, and of the glory of the Lord may be personated, as no doubt it is, by them who have only temporary faith, the nature of their hope, being suited to the nature of their faith,

faith, both without a root of habitual saving grace in the soul; and these who get a taste of the powers of the life to come, may have a hope suited to such a taste. *4thly*, Zeal for God may be personated, as it was by Jehu, and by these spoken of, Rom. x. 2. *5thly*, *Mortification* may be personated; as it was in these mentioned by the apostle, 2 Peter ii. that escaped the pollutions of the world, thro' the knowledge of the Lord Jesus; a natural aversion, and restraint from the out-breakings of some lusts, by a common work of the Spirit, may look very like mortifying grace. *6thly*, *Patient waiting upon*, and *sweet submission* to the will of God, as to doubtful events, even in matters of moment, may be personated: So it was in Joab, 2 Sam. x. 11, 12. *7thly*, *Humble self denial* may be personated, as it was in Saul, 2 Sam. x. 22, 23 and xi. 13. *8thly*, *Gracious sincerity* may be personated, by moral sincerity, which makes a man to mean what he saith, professeth, or doth without any known dissimulation: This was in the Pagan Abimelech, in a great measure, who saith to God, *in the integrity of my heart, have I done this*, to which the Lord beareth witness; and no doubt it may be in persons who have only a form of godliness; And belike, was in Jehu for the time, when he said to Jonadab, *Come see my zeal for the Lord of hosts*: and also in those spoken of, Psal. lxxviii. 35. Who very probably meant, as they said for the time, and did not wittingly dissemble, though they did really, and before God, in respect of closs and latent hypocrisy, of whom therefore it is said, that *they flattered him with their lips, and lied unto him with their tongues*. *9thly*, *Tendernefs*, that very precious grace, may be personated; as it was in Joab, 1 Cor. xxi. 3, 6. Who, as to that particular act, quite out-stripped gracious and tender David.

Eighthly, As to suffering; They may go a very considerable length, even to give their bodies to be burned let be to suffer lower and lesser things, in a good cause, and in professing the truth without a principle of true saving grace, and of sincere love to Jesus Christ, as the apostle insinuates, men may do, 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

Ninthly, As to dying with a sort of peace, of an ill-grounded, and deluding assurance of heaven and salvation from which there was no driving of them, while they lived; and so they may go down to the grave, with a lie in their right-hand, and perish under a soul murdering delusion, never awakening out of their dream, till the sparks of the wrath of God take hold of them, and drive them out of their fools paradise; as is plainly insinuated concerning these spoken of, Mat. vii. 22, 23. Luke xiii. 25, 26, 27.

This is a very great, and even stupendious length that

hypocrites, and such as have a form of godliness, without the power of it may go, where I have not defined and determined what is the *ultimum quod sic*, or the very utmost length they may go, neither hath God in scripture done, for any thing I know, having in deep wisdom forbore to do it, on design to provoke his own people, to diligent endeavours on good grounds, to make sure, they are a length that no hypocrite can go; that they are not only almost, but altogether Christians: I do not deny, but readily grant, that he hath in his word, ride marches betwixt the hypocrite, and the sound believer; betwixt the mere form, and the power of godliness, betwixt the only almost, and the altogether Christian: The one never sincerely and heartily receiveth whole Christ; never cordially embraceth, and closeth with him, for all ends, intents and purposes, for which he offereth himself to sinners in the gospel, nor maketh an honest, intire, absolute, universal, unreserved, unexcepted, and sincerely designed and endeavour, irreversible surrender, and resignation of himself to him, to be saved and guided by him, on his own terms, and in his own way, as the other doth; yet I say still, he hath not precisely told us, what is the very yondermost step that the hypocrite may go, so as he cannot go one step further, though he had told us that he never goes such a length: Neither have I said, that all these fore-mentioned things do meet together in one, and the self-same person, that is without a principle of true saving grace, and of the power of godliness; some of them may be in one, and others of them in another; fewer of them, in some, and more of them in others; whatever be, or be not in this matter, *de facto*, and eventually, yet it may be it will not be so very easily convincingly to demonstrate, that it is utterly impossible, that most, if not all of them, may be in one and the same such person since every one of them may be where there is no principle of special saving grace: or all of them in any such person, is very rare, if ever at all it come to pass.

The use of this doctrine serves for exhortation to you all, as to let this truth sink deep into your hearts, that there is a form of godliness, without power; as there is a form of it with power, and to learn well to discern the difference betwixt the one and the other: So not to sit down with every thing that looks like godliness; for though ye have the form, it is not at all false to restone it, we design not to cry down a form, but would have you not to separate the form from the power, nor to prefer the form to the power, for further clearing and pressing of this use, We shall, 1st, Give you some marks and evidences of godliness, that

that hath power with the form. 2d, Some marks of the form of godliness without power.

As to the 1st, The form of godliness joined with the power, hath, among others, these five marks, 1st, Much self-deniedness, whereas a mere form hath self-love as its fountain; the power of it puts a man to deny himself, and his own righteousness, and humbles him under the conviction, and sense of his sin and misery; it puts him to be denied to his own contentment and satisfaction, and to seek them in God; it makes him to love God more than his pleasure, profit or preferment, or any thing else in the world. 2dly, It puts on to the practice of these duties, that are more inward and spiritual, as well as of these that are more outward, it puts on to the exercise of repentance, of faith in Christ, of mortification of lusts, of self-searching, and examination, and the like; because the life of religion, consists mainly in these. 3dly, It puts on to the exercise of graces, as well as of duties; a natural conscience may put on to duties, and to frequency in them; but godliness in power puts also to the exercise of graces, as of patience, submission, humility, sincerity, love to God and to the saints, &c. These are fruits of the spirit, and of the new creature, members of the new man, which by their actings evidence life. 4thly, The power of godliness shews itself, in the right manner of going about duties: It makes men pray and praise in the spirit, to sorrow for sin after a godly sort, to hear the word so, as to be edified by it, &c. 5thly, The power of godliness puts the Christian as much to oppose and wrestle against defects, and short comings in his spiritual growth, as against the sins that directly let and hinder it, it causeth trouble and grief to him, as well for defects in sincerity as for more gross sins, for the weakness of faith, and coldness of love, as well as for out-breaking evils; to dread and deprecate hypocrisy, counterfeiting of religion, as well as more palpable profanities; Where godliness bears rule by its power, it commands holiness, in all manner of conversation, in conformity to the holiness of God, and will challenge for the least defect and short-coming.

2dly, As for marks of the form of godliness, without the power; They may be gathered from the contraries of the former; but more particularly you may take these. 1. It evidenceth the form without the power, when persons are much more in outward than inward duties, or when inward duties are neglected, as prayer in secret, self-searching, mortifying of hidden lusts, and the like; when men are much more, in what they keep up the shew and appearance of religion, than in what may advance the substance of it,

by seeking to have the heart further renewed : The man that rests on a form, is satisfied, and goes away with it, without serious reflections on what escapeth him : Such a one will guard against drunkenness, and the breakings out of his unruly passion, who never seriously laid to heart, the sinfulness of these evils, nor mourned for their having sometimes prevailed over him ; the sincere man differs from him in this, that he repents, as well for such evils, when they are past, when he endeavours to guard against the out-breakings of them, for time to come, he looks at original corruption, as the fountain, and mourns over that, as David did, Psal. li. *2dly*, The formal man makes it his business, to rickel, and rear up high superstructures of profession, and of the externals of religion, but never lays a sure foundation ; he is as one that would be at sowing of much seed, but takes no care to weed it, or to remove what may obstruct its growth ; whereas the sincere man digs deep, that he may lay a sure foundation, and that, what he builds on it, may stand when the storm comes : and carefully, and seasonably takes out weeds that hinder the growth of what he hath sowed, *3dly*, It evidenceth a form without power, when men are taken up with the matter, and external part of duty, and are challenged for omissions, whilst in the mean time, they look not after the right manner of doing duty, nor are challenged for what is amiss in that, or for want of following spiritual fruits ; a formal man will readily be challenged, if he neglect prayer before he go abroad, especially, if he meet with any cross providence that day ; when the sincere man will be challenged, for his formal, lifeless, and whole-hearted way of going about his duty ; the formal man will be challenged, if he go not to church, but takes not heed how he hears ; but the sincere man, by the power of godliness, is not only put to come to church, to hear sermon, but is also challenged, if the word be not mixed with faith, in the hearing of it, if he do not lay it up in his heart, and practise it in his life, he would as well reap the benefit of the duty, as be at it ; he loves not to run as uncertain, nor to fight, as one beating the air, whereas the formal man is well pleased, if he go about the external duty. *4thly*, It evidenceth a form of godliness, when men are all for action, and doing in the externals of religion, but not at all for suffering, but powerful godliness commends, and commands both, that we should speak and do for Christ, and be also ready to suffer for him, as we shall be called to it : It is an evil token when a man can speak for Christ, but cannot hear of suffering for him ; can reprove, but can by no means suffer a reproof ; can go about

bout duties, when there is no hazard, but quite shrinks, and sits up when trouble appears; As it is said in the parable of the seed that was sown on stony ground, it sprung up, but withered when the heat of persecution came. *5thly*, It is an evidence of the form without power, when men in their religious performances keep their hearts from all exercise of kindly humiliation, and from what may put them out of conceit with themselves: Such readily level in all they do, at one of these two, or at both, to be esteemed by others, and to have an estimation of themselves; hence it is, that they are here called proud, boasters, heady, high minded; they cannot comport with any thing in godliness, that crosseth their humour or corrupt inclination: What, say they, we are men, and not beasts; we scorn to be trampled on, and made slaves; in a word, whatever they do, (as I said) they can suffer nothing; if there be any thing that may gain a name to them, they have hearts, heads, and hands for that, but they know not what it is to suffer an injury; whereas the power of godliness, according to the scripture, instructs the Christian, when he is smitten on the one cheek, to hold up the other.

The third point of doctrine, from the words, is, *That men do far more ordinarily, and readily take up the form, than seek after the power of godliness, and desire more to seem to be religious and godly than to be so in very deed*; There are these two reasons, among others, why it is so, 1. The form, shew and appearance of godliness appears to them desirable: Hence it comes, that few in the visible church are so grossly profane, but they have a sort of desire to be accounted godly; they will not deny, that God is good, and therefore must some way grant, that it is good to be like him, and they would be esteemed such: Thus many come to church, wait on ordinances, and go about external duties of religion, because these have some likeness unto, and some resemblance of godliness: They cannot endure to be accounted Atheists, whilst in the mean time they can as little endure the power of godliness: This leads to the 2^d, reason, which is, That the form of godliness, is much more easy than the power of it, and may be got bowed towards a compliance with mens lusts, which the power can never be; it is always checking and reproving for what is amiss, it is always crossing corrupt inclinations and humours, it will by no means suffer them to be quiet, and at ease in any thing that is displeasing to God: it is like a healing plaister, that first sharply bites and corrods before it heal; but the form will admit of undue latitudes, and like oil, smooths the sore a little, whilst it is in the mean time under cutting, and putrifying; nay, love to mens lusts, will put them on to take up the form of religion and at the same time keep them back, and fright them from the power of it; It was the same inordinate love to self interest, that made Jehu so zealous, and forward in destroying Baal, that made him abstain from sincere worshipping of the true God, according to his own commandment, and to cleave to the sin of Jeroboam; so self love will bring a man to church, and also make him stop his ear to the most powerful persuasions, to quit and abandon his lusts.

The use of the doctrine serves to exhort and press all to a very diligent

diligent and accurate search of themselves, least any who are disposed to think that they have been long students of godliness, be found to take the form, for the power of it ; O ! sad mistake, and yet not unusual, there being but few in those days, who have not some form of godliness, and yet with most, it is such as suffers them and their lusts to live quietly together : I shall offer a few considerations from the text, to perswade you to a narrow search of yourselves, which may also be as so many marks, 1. Consider, That it is (as I said) much more easy, to come at the form, than at the power of godliness ; and if your godliness be such as you have easy come by and get maintained with little difficulty, it speaks you shrewdly to be yet under a mere form of it ; it is hard to get two or three, a very few in a congregation, brought under the power of godliness, but it is an easy matter, to bring the generality under a form of it, There may be a profest general subjection to the gospel, which would in so far be cherished ; but ye would take heed, that ye do not deceive and cheat your own souls by it ; ye have all some form, but, alas ! this preached gospel is fruitless, as to many of you ; ye almost think it needless, to speak any thing to you, to the commendation of Christ, of faith in him, and of holiness, these being truths ye know well enough ; O ! what a desirable thing would it be, that ye could be as easily brought under the power of godliness, as ye are brought to the form of it ; but alas, many of you, never observed a difference betwixt the form and the power, but look on both as one : if there were no other ground, this might make you suspect yourselves, as having only a form without the power of godliness. *A 2^d Consideration may be taken from the time wherein this form of godliness without power will be most prevalent, and that is, *in the last days* of the gospel, even these wherein we now live, for the words are a prophecy of the evils that shall abound in these days ; if so, ought not this to alarm you, to a serious trial of yourselves, whether ye have the form of godliness with, or without power : Since this is much verified in our days, it calls you to dread and be jealous of yourselves. If it shall be asked here, What is the reason, why a mere form godliness aboundeth so much in these last days ? I *Ans.* 1. It may proceed from Satan's subtilty, who finding, because of the brightly shining light of the gospel, to the shaming profanity, that he cannot get men detained in gross profanity, gives them, as it were, a dispensation, to take on a form of religion, without the power ; by which they are still kept under his power, and often with more difficulty rescued from it, then if they were openly profane ; when he cannot prevail with many of you to be gross swearers, liars, drunkards, cheats, &c. he labours to make you mere formalists, and hypocrites ; and O ! how many gross hypocrites are they, who are ready to cry out against others, as hypocrites ? He will suffer you to go to church, but will, as it were, whisper you in the ear, take as little of the preaching as you please, and no more than serves your turn, and may keep up your empty form, and by this means he prevails more, than by his tentations to profanity with not a few, at least, 2^{dly}, It may proceed from

mens strong compliances with their selfish inclinations, and designs, accounting gain to be godliness; which designs may consist with the form, though not with the power of godliness; And great things being prophesied of, and promised to the church, in the latter days, and men naturally loving more external accidents of grandeur, pomp, and advantage, in a fancied temporal kingdom of the saints, then the substance and power of godliness itself, they are ready to take on a form and shew of it, as intitling them to a share of that imaginary kingdom, 3dly, It may proceed from the righteous judgment of God, who, when men and women rest on a form, gives them up to a form, *that hearing, they may hear, and not understand, and that seeing, they may see, and not perceive, &c.* as it is, 1sa. vi. Which is very palpably fulfilled in these days. 4thly, For pressing to an exact search of yourselves, consider, that the religion of many is wofully consistent with gross evils reckoned up here; try if yours be so, are not many of you lovers of your own selves? Who never lothed, but always loved, and thought well of yourselves; are ye not covetous, proud, boasters, truce and covenant breakers, making little, or no conscience, to keep your word and engagements, especially to God, &c. These speak your godliness to be but a form: Make due application of these things, and examine yourselves according to them; there hath hardly been any generation since Paul wrote, on which these evils might be more justly charged, than on this; It is a generation that pretends highly to godliness, but ah! are there not many, who, under this cloak and visorn are heady, high-minded, proud, covetous, lovers of pleasures, more than lovers of God, &c. So that we know not well whether to make these motives to self searching, or grounds of conviction, and lamentation; ye would readily be huffy at, and even despise such as would say to many of you, that ye are ungodly; but is it not a self loving, a self pleasing, and self-seeking godliness, that ye have a form and shew without power and substance? I think I dare pronounce this concerning the godliness of many of you, as will readily be seen, when a suitable and searching trial comes, and though I will not in application, condescend on particular persons, yet there are many, to whom Christ will apply it; alas! this preached gospel hath no efficacy on many of you, neither doth fruits of righteousness follow the same; would to God there were as many evidences to prove you, to be under the power of godliness, as there are to prove you to be under the form, without the power thereof.

The 4th, and last point of doctrine, from these words is, *That there is no state and condition more sad and deplorable, more dangerous to mens selves, and more abominable in the sight of God, than to have a form of godliness without the power of it;* With what loathing and detestation doth our blessed Lord Jesus speak, Rev. iii. of formal and lukewarm Laodicea, threatening to spue her out of his mouth? The deplorableness and dangerousness of such a condition appears by these. 1. By the aptness and readiness of such persons to sin, when they meet with a suitable temptation; where self love, pride, covetousness, headiness, high mindedness are, they will not be

be got restrained, and kepted in by a mere form of godliness; and what know ye that are such, when, where, and how, these may break out in you? do we not see many who have had as great a shew as of any of us, unmasked, and discovered frequently? And how soon, and how easily may many of us catch a fall? *2dly*, By this, That the form of godliness will never amount to a solid proof and evidence of our peace with God, or of our interest in him, which the power of it will do: when ye come to your death beds, and to that solemn appearance before the tribunal of God, it will be no solid ground of peace to you, that ye came to church, heard preachings, prayed, read the scriptures, and took the sacrament, if there be no more; O consider with fear and trembling, the deceitful pleading with the Lord, of these persons mentioned, Luke xiii. who are brought in saying, *Lord have we not heard thee preach in our streets, have we not eaten and drunken in thy presence?* And of these others, who, Matth. vii. say to him, *Have we not preached and prophesied in thy name, and cast out devils, and done many wonderful works;* to whom he will notwithstanding say, *depart from me ye workers of iniquity, I never knew you;* It will be no ground of peace to you, that ye were called Christians, that ye were almost Christians, and that ye were not far from the kingdom of God, and that ye could plead your descent from religious and godly progenitors; God will tell you, *That he can out of stones raise up children to Abraham, and that the ax is laid to the root of the trees, and that every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewed down, and cast into the fire:* Yea, ye shall at last lose the form who have not the power of godliness. *3dly*, By this, That such a case will not lessen, nor mitigate your judgment; though it be in several respects, better to be formal than openly profane, and dissolute, yet being accompanied with more light, and with more, at least seeming nearness to God, it will make your judgment the heavier; therefore the scripture says of very wicked persons, that *they shall have their portion with hypocrites*, insinuating, that to the formal and hypocritical professors hell is hottest: All ye professors must unavoidably, every one of you, be ranked either among them that have a form without power, or among them that have power with the form of godliness; ye must either be really godly, and study to be holy in all manner of conversation, as God is holy, or to be more liable to the judgment of God, than if ye had never had a form; O be exhorted to guard against all profanity, and out breaking sin, and also no less against inward hypocrisy; study to have your godliness so comprehensive, as it may put you beyond a mere form into the power, heart, life and substance of it; considering, that there are many in these last days, who will live and die in their sins under a form of godliness without the power of it, which ought to be a warning to us all; that it may not be thus with us, the Lord himself powerfully perswade us to take with the warning,