

Godliness

This illusion about God and how he works in the world is not the only illusion God wants to break in us. He also wants to help us see who we really are. One writer who lived from 1542 through to 1591 is known as “John of the Cross.” He writes about what he calls, “secret pride.” People who have this will begin to cover themselves. “They will also begin to fear confession to another for it would ruin their image. So they soften their sins when they make confession in order to make themselves appear less imperfect.” I remember a time myself when I came to be convinced that I wasn't perfect, and I couldn't stand it! It made me so angry, not to be perfect! God was asking me, “Where is your perfection to come from? Does it truly come from yourself? Or do you need someone else to provide it for you?”

God wants to break our illusion of ourselves. He wants to bring us to the point where we see how very helpless we really are to save ourselves. It is when we come to that point, when we see how helpless we are, that God comes to us and reminds us of who he is. Who is God? He is our helper. It might appear that we are helpless to change things. It may seem as though we are helpless. It may even appear to us in our trial that God has abandoned us, that he has left the universe to see how sin and evil people will run things. And this would all be very true except that there is God. *Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your servant away in anger; you have been my helper. Do not reject me or forsake me, O God my Savior* (Ps 27:9).

We're to add to our faith perseverance, and to perseverance, godliness. *But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God – having the form of godliness but denying its power* (2 Tim 3:2-5). I find those words to cut me to the heart. Paul is not writing them to those we would call, “the unbelievers.” He is not writing them to those who “don't go to church.” He is writing to people who consider themselves spiritual. They have the form of godliness, but it is godliness that simply goes through the motions with no personal connection to God.

Peter has been reminding us to add perseverance to the qualities we aim at. He reminds us that the gospel gives us *everything we need for life and godliness*. We have become *participants of the divine nature*. Christ is in us. He never let's go of us. This is really what perseverance is: God is holding on to us more than we are holding on to him. He dwells in us through faith. We need only look within, to him, to get the help we need to be all he desires us to be with his help. Godliness has to do with our love for God. It is connected to perseverance, because when we never give up, when God never gives up on us and holds us tight to his heart, it is a great thing to be able to say, “I love God, even though I've gone through some very tough things. I love him more than anything else.”