

Forms of Godliness vs. Conformity to Christ

by Elliott Nesch

The sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing Jesus Christ personally and living a life of power and grace, rather than just going through external forms of godliness.

Duration: 43:12

Scripture: Isaiah 1:13, John 5:19

Topics: "Godliness"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that we don't have to save the world because God has it under control. He encourages believers to be faithful in the little things that God has entrusted to them, such as loving their spouse and guiding their children. The preacher highlights the importance of being in close communion with God, only speaking and doing what the Father desires. He also reminds the audience that without Jesus, they can do nothing, and that their actions should be motivated by glorifying Jesus and God the Father. The sermon concludes with a reminder that Jesus allowed his life to be interrupted to serve others, but it is important to find a balance and not overdo it at the expense of one's family.

Transcript

Well, let's pray. Our Father in Heaven, we come to you in the name of Jesus, the Messiah and Son of God, and pray that you open our hearts, that we'd be able to receive your word, and just pray the Son of Man be lifted up, and that all men would be drawn unto Him, and that you would be glorified and magnified, and be with us tonight, and change lives by the power of the Gospel. In Jesus' name, Amen.

2 Corinthians chapter 3 verse 6 says, The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life. The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life. If you turn in your Bible to Isaiah chapter 1 verse 13 and 14, Isaiah is prophesying to an apostate Israel.

He says, Your new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with it. It is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts, my soul hateth.

They are a trouble unto me. I am weary to bear them. Here we are at Tabernacles, and I know there's a diversity of convictions, and my heart is with Paul, that some esteem one day above another, and others esteem every day alike.

I happen to be one that esteems every day alike, but my purpose in reading this is not to come against anyone's convictions. I'm blessed to be here among diverse brethren, and I appreciate the fellowship, and it's an honor to preach, but that's not where I'm going with this. Israel was in a state of apostasy.

God commanded these things that they should obey them and walk in them, and they had these forms of godliness, but they were denying the power. They were just going through the motions. 2 Timothy 3, verse 5 talks about in the last days, those that were having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.

From such, turn away. And we have forms of godliness in the New Covenant. You look at a head covering, that a woman's not to pray or prophesy without her head covered.

But if that daughter or that wife or sister is in rebellion in her heart toward God, it's vain, and God hates it. It's a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. In the same way, as we look at Isaiah chapter 1 here, we get to talk about things God commands us to do, such as ministry, singing, our gatherings, modesty in church attendance and missions, and He could call it iniquity, an abomination, that He's weary of it, and His soul hates it.

If it's just a form of godliness and there's no power, we can go through the motions and forms and think that we're saved when there's no power in our life over sin. The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth light. In verse 7 of 2 Timothy chapter 3, it says, ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

So there would be some that would be always learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. So being saved is not about having correct theology. You can have understanding and you can be always learning and never come to the knowledge of the truth.

You can be lost. In Philippians chapter 3 verse 6, Paul said he was blameless, touching the righteousness of the law. He was blameless, touching the righteousness of the law, and yet he was lost.

It wasn't until he was born again. In Galatians chapter 1 verse 6, Paul says, it pleased God to reveal His Son in me. So there was a change that took place.

So we have to begin with the foundation of Jesus Christ. He's our foundation. And we could ask, who is Jesus? Because there's a lot of different Jesuses out there today.

Everybody knows the name of Jesus, but they have a lot of different ideas about who He is. You could go to a Muslim who would say that Jesus was merely a prophet, that Judas was put upon the cross in Jesus' place, that He was not the Son of God. You could go to the cults that deny the deity of Jesus Christ.

Some say that Jesus was a good teacher, but He doesn't give us that option. You can't say that Jesus was a prophet of God, and look at the things He said, because God cannot lie. You can't say that Jesus was a good moral teacher, because a good moral teacher cannot lie.

Jesus said, I and the Father are one. So He doesn't allow us to dismiss Him as merely a prophet, or merely a good teacher, or merely a man. Either Jesus was a liar, or He was a lunatic, or He is Lord, who He claimed to be.

And so I wanted to talk about the otherness of Christ, the holiness of Christ, the separateness of Christ, how there is such a vast gulf between us and the Lord. His thoughts, and His ways, and His ideas, and His judgments are altogether different than ours, because He is the Son of God. Go to Isaiah chapter 55,

verses 8 and 9. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. So we have to get this in our hearts and our minds as being under the discipline of Jesus, as we're called disciples, that we would see how vastly different He is. And we can see this as we read through the Gospels, how the disciples were constantly being confronted that Jesus' thoughts and His ways were so contrary to theirs.

We think of James and John in their zeal. They said, when Jesus was rejected, Lord, should we call fire down from heaven and consume these sinners? And Jesus said, you don't know what spirits you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

He had to tell Peter, get behind Me, Satan. How many times He told them, you are without understanding. Don't you understand yet? Don't you understand the things that I say? He told them again and again that He was going to be raised from the dead.

And they didn't believe Him. If they did, they would have been lined up at the tomb on the third day. So how often they got it wrong.

And we can see the long suffering and the patience that Jesus must have had knowing that He is the Son of God. Knowing that He came down from heaven. He surrendered all His rights.

And He is dwelling with these men who just don't get it. So as Jesus, as fathers and leaders, and when we make disciples, we need to have the patience of Christ and not expect failure, but anticipate failure and anticipate misunderstandings. That as we proclaim Jesus, people would see the otherness in us, the holiness in us.

And we could hear them saying, you have the words of eternal life. You are a good teacher. We believe you to be the Messiah.

We believe you to be the Son of David. But who is this man that walks on the water? Who is this man that calls to the winds and the seas and they obey Him? Who is this man that raises the dead? Never has it been before. Jesus proclaims to us, I am the fulfillment of the law and the prophets.

I am Jacob's ladder. He told Nathaniel, hereafter you shall see heaven opened and angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. I am the manna that the Israelites ate in the wilderness.

I am the rock that they drank from. All those lambs that you've been sacrificing for Passover. I am the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world.

I am the way, the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father, God, but through me. At the Mount of Transfiguration, the disciples were confronted with this otherness, the holiness of Christ. Jesus appeared with Moses representing the law and Elijah representing the prophets in Matthew chapter 17.

And Peter, in his zeal, he said, Lord, let us build an altar. An altar for Moses, an altar for Elijah, an altar for you. And God says from heaven, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.

Hear ye Him. Hear Jesus. Jesus said in Matthew 11, 29, Take my yoke upon you and learn of me.

So we need to go back to the historical Jesus of the Scriptures. The Jesus of reality and truth. He says, take my yoke upon you and learn of me.

So, Jesus, God's only begotten Son is the object that we're to conform to. We're to be like Jesus. He says, learn of me.

God says, hear Him. Romans 8, 29. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

So Jesus is the object of our conformity. We're to be conformed to Him and this is God's plan. We are predestined as God's people to be conformed to the image of the Son of God.

Jesus said, learn of me. But there's also an experiential, a revelational learning. Paul said in Ephesians 4, 20, Ye did not so learn Christ.

He was rebuking them. They did not so learn Christ. There's a difference between learning Christ and learning of Christ.

Big difference. All of us in this room know who the President is, but none of us know the President personally. That's the difference that I'm talking about.

Jesus said, learn of me, but we're also to learn Christ. There's a difference between knowing of and knowing personally in a relationship. There's a difference between believing and believing on for salvation.

If we go to Matthew 21, 38. This is the parable of the husbandmen. And the husbandmen are the chief priests and the Pharisees, Jesus later said in verse 45.

And Jesus is the Son. I'm just going to read this one verse, verse 38. Jesus said, When the husbandmen saw the Son, they said among themselves, This is the heir.

Come, let us kill him and let us seize on his inheritance. The Pharisees and the chief priests knew this is the Son. Let us kill him.

They believed Jesus. They knew this was the Son of God. They believed His words, but they didn't believe on Him for salvation.

They were lost. In fact, they wanted to kill Him. So there's a difference between believing and believing on.

James says that even the devils believe and they tremble. Do we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? We can know the Word of God, but not know the God of the Word. Turn to John chapter 5. This message is especially for young people.

It's for all of us, but some of us may be backslidden. But for young people especially who've been brought up in a Christian home, we're taught a lot about Jesus. But do we know Him? John chapter 5 and verse 39.

Jesus said, Search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me. So the Bible in and of itself is not an end. And don't get me wrong, I'm not coming against the Scriptures.

I believe the Scriptures are the inspired Word of God and we're to obey them. But the Bible is not an end in itself. It's an illustration.

It's a road map of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, In them you think you have eternal life, but they are they which testify of Me, and you will not come to Me that you might have life. The Jews from a very young and early age had to memorize the Torah.

They had to be able to recite it. They had the Scriptures memorized, and yet they were lost, many of them. Eternal life is not in the Scriptures.

It's in the person, Jesus Christ. And the Scriptures are our road map and illustration to get us there. I talked to a man in prison once who said he read the Bible cover to cover seven times, and yet he was an atheist.

You will not come to Me that you might have life. So we're not saved by our forms. We're not saved by our scriptural memorization.

I'm talking about revelation versus merely cerebral, something that's in the mind. And we are to love God with all of our mind, but it doesn't end there. The Scriptures testify of Jesus, and we need to come to Him that we might have life.

Go to 2 Corinthians 13. Verse 5. Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith. Prove your own selves.

Know ye not your own selves how that Jesus Christ is in you? Except you be reprobates. So that's my plea tonight. Examine yourselves to see whether you be in the faith.

Take the Word of God and what the Word of God says about a true Christian. Take the test. And if you fall short of the test, repeat and believe.

And I wanted to focus on this Jesus Christ is in you. As we said that Christ is the object of conformity that God wants to bring about in us. If we go to Galatians 4. Verse 19.

My little children, Paul says, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you. I desire to be present with you now and to change my voice for I stand in doubt of you. So Paul's heart was singling out brothers and sisters in prayer and laboring, wrestling with God that Christ be formed in them.

This was God's heart that Christ be formed in you. For every person here tonight, God's heart is that Christ be formed in you. Romans 8. Verse 10.

And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness. Colossians 1. Verse 27. To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Philippians 1. Verse 20. According to my earnest expectation and my hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

So in the Christian life, we should have an inward revelation of the Lord Jesus, His set-apartness, His holiness. And Christianity is the invasion of God into the life of a man or a woman or a boy or a girl. You go into God and God goes into you and He pushes everything else out for He can have no equal.

And He didn't send His Son to die upon the cross merely to get you out of earth and into heaven, but He sent His Son to die upon the cross to get God out of heaven into you. Christ in us, the hope of glory. This is what we were predestined for.

This is what we were made for from before the foundation of the world. God created us and ordained us for good works. Just like a car is created with a purpose and a function, but it can't be a car functionally unless you put gas in it.

A lamp cannot function as a lamp unless you put oil in it. And a man or a woman or a boy or a girl cannot function as such unless you put God in them. So let God be in you, boys and girls.

And talking about having the right understanding of Jesus, we need to not fashion Jesus in our own image, boys and girls, but go to the Jesus as revealed in the Word. We often want to make an idle Jesus, gentle Jesus, meek and mild, that doesn't chastise us. But let's go to the Word.

I want to look at Luke chapter 2. This is for the boys and the girls. Verse 42. This is when Jesus was a boy and He was in the temple.

It says, When He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. Look at verse 48. Jesus was in the temple and He was teaching.

It says, When they saw Him, His parents, they were amazed. And His mother said unto Him, Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? Behold, Thy Father and I have sought Thee sorrowing. And He said unto them, How is it that you sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business? And they understood not the saying which He spake unto them.

And He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject unto them. But His mother kept all these sayings in her heart. So boys and girls, at your place and circumstances in life, if you want to please God, if you want to be like Jesus, this is when Jesus was a boy.

It says, He was subject unto His parents. Subject is to be under obedience, to submit, to obey. And it says in verse 52, Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.

So God's favor was upon Him. He was in subjection to His parents. And keep in mind that Joseph was not even His biological father.

But this is the man that God ordained to be His father. And there might be many boys and girls in here with fathers or mothers who are unworthy, it may seem, in their eyes. But God grants authority to foolish people sometimes.

And in order for God to work in your life as a boy or girl, He's put them in your life so that you might be subject to them. And this is pleasing to God. The evidence of God's working in your life is that you'd be subject to your parents.

Honor thy father and mother. God's will will not call you to do something contrary to your parents, whatever it may be, because He doesn't contradict His Word. Unless they're acting outside of His Word in immorality.

Obey God rather than men, but they're entrusted over you. Likewise, men and women, sometimes we can be thinking we're led of Jesus, but God's call will never contradict His Word. Sometimes we can be

overzealous and we can consider ministry and preaching the Gospel as opposed to carnal things like changing diapers and whatever.

And that's a lie. Everything is spiritual when Christ is in you. God is not going to call a father to forsake his wife and his children to go minister to widows and orphans.

He's not going to create more widows and orphans to call someone to go minister to them. So there's a balance. Jesus did allow His life to be interrupted.

Like when we read in Matthew 14, after John the Baptist died, Jesus wanted some rest and recuperation and He headed to the mountains with His disciples. And He was met with the multitudes. So Jesus allowed His life to be interrupted to serve.

And He fed them. But we can't save the world. And God's given us a sphere of ministry, each one of us in our life, and I'm learning myself when I can overdo it.

And it's unfair to my wife and my family. And that's not Jesus. In Acts 3.2 it talks about a man who was born lame and he was laid at the entrance, at the gate of the temple, every day of his life.

And this was after Jesus' ministry. Jesus must have passed this man when He went to the temple all His life and He was there lame. But Jesus didn't heal him.

We don't have to save the world. God's got it under control. Be faithful in the little that God's put in your life.

Faithful with your wife to love her as Christ loved the church. Faithful with your children to shepherd them and lead them in the way they should go. He saved that man for Peter to heal.

Go to John 5.19 Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do. For what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. So this ought to be our heart that we should be in such close communion with God that we're only saying what the Father says and we're only doing what the Father does.

Turn over to 15.5 Jesus said, I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit. For without Me ye can do nothing.

So without Jesus we can do nothing. One man of God said a lot of public ministry is going to go up in ashes one day because these public ministers were all about themselves. They thought that godliness was a means of gain.

And so we are not only going to be judged by the things that we do, but the motivation behind the things that we do. Why were we doing what we were doing? Without Jesus we can do nothing. So do all things to the glory of Jesus Christ and God the Father.

Jesus' life as ours should be was characterized by power and by grace. Matthew chapter 1 said, You shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins. Not in their sins, but from their sins.

Jesus lived a life of perfection. He was tempted in every way that we were tempted, and yet He was faithful, holy, and perfect. And we are to be saved from our sins.

Jesus didn't only die for our justification to clear us from the penalty of sin so that we didn't have to go through the wrath of God or hell or death, but He died for so much more. He died to set us free from the power of sin. Saved from our sins, not in our sins.

Sanctification. Romans chapter 8. There are so many ideas out there about grace, but in Romans chapter 8 it says that sin shall have no dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace. So we've talked about grace being power.

And this is one way to examine your life in the light of the Word. If you are truly in the grace of God, then sin has no power over you. That's the evidence of the grace of God, that sin has no power over us.

Because Jesus came to save us from our sins. There's a dear brother that I've known for several years. We've been best friends for a long time.

Over the years he's struggled with addiction to drugs and forsaking his family. Scriptures say he's worse than an infidel. And I knew him better than anybody else.

And he would ask me, Elliot, why is it that you've had victory over your sin and I can't get victory over my sin? Again and again he'd repent. And again and again he'd fall into the same sins, addiction, forsaking his family, destroying his home. And he hated his sin.

He wanted power over it. And I didn't know what to say to him except that I came to the Son of God by faith. I was in bondage to addiction.

And God set me free. Another brother, struggling with anger, outbursts of wrath, hating his sin but wanting to be set free, just coming to counsel and wanting a way out. And I said, I don't know what to say, but I know that I was in bondage to outbursts of wrath, punched holes in my mom's wall and her doors, strangled people, done violence to people, thrown them down the stairs.

And I came to the Son of God in faith and He changed me, gave me a new heart. And by the grace of God I can say that I've never raised my voice with my wife and my children. And that's not me.

I'm a wretch. It's Christ in me. But it's available to everyone by grace.

The power of a changed life. This first brother I was talking about, he recently went to a six-month program. I listened to some of his preaching recently and he claims to have been delivered.

And he said that nobody could help him. There were people in his life but nobody could help him, no matter what counsel he received. But he said, what set him free, he said he realized that he knew that justification was by faith, but what he had to learn was that sanctification was by faith also.

Day by day, moment by moment, minute by minute, second by second. Examine yourselves. See whether you be in the faith.

No form can save us. No formula can save us. No sinner's prayer can save us.

Although God does work through these things, but the only one that can save you is Jesus Christ and Him crucified. You have to come to Him. It's between you and Him.

And have a personal calvary. Die. Surrender.

That He might live. Galatians chapter 2 verse 20. I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith of the Son of God.

So there's the key again if you're asking how you can attain this victory. It's by faith in the Son of God. Again in Ephesians 3 verse 17.

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. Sometimes when we go out evangelizing we tell sinners that Jesus is standing at the door of your heart and He's knocking. But let's go to the scriptures and see what that's talking about in Revelation chapter 3 verse 20.

Jesus is talking to a church. He says, Behold I stand at the door and knock, and if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me. This isn't for sinners, this is to the church.

Jesus is talking to a church with a worship service in full swing. These believers had become content to gather together in His name without His presence. But even now He's standing at the door and knocking.

And if any man, if any individual, boy or girl, will hear His voice and open the door, He will come in to them and will sup with them. That's an invitation. So God's answer is always His Son for every problem that we're confronted with.

It's always Jesus. And even the things that I'm saying tonight, they're just words. And it says, The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.

These brothers that I mentioned that were struggling with sin, I want to be faithful to speak into their lives. But ultimately it's between the individual, it's between you and God. The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.

So what are you going to do with this message? The mark of a life governed by the Holy Spirit is that such a life is continually and ever more and more occupied with Jesus Christ. That Christ is becoming greater and greater and greater as time goes on. Is the Holy Spirit within you presenting God's fullness in His Son in an ever-growing way? So may we not have just a form of godliness and deny the power thereof, but have the power of God in our life to be set free from sin.

And there may be some here tonight with bitterness or anger, addiction, self-righteousness, pride, pain, sin, unforgiveness. Go to Jesus by faith. The answer is always God's Son.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/24/SID24566.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/elliott-nesch/forms-of-godliness-vs-conformity-to-christ/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net