

The Call to Freedom from Religiosity

by Santosh Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the difference between religiosity and true spirituality. It highlights the importance of genuine love for God, giving everything to Him, and seeking His righteousness, peace, and joy above all else. The speaker challenges the listeners to prioritize the kingdom of heaven within them and to focus on honoring God's name through their lives, rather than just religious activities or appearances.

Scripture: Matthew 23:15, 2 Timothy 3:5, 2 Corinthians 4:10, John 12:24, Matthew 23:27, 1 John 4:1, Revelation 2:4, 2 Peter 1:11

Topics: "True Spirituality", "Prioritizing God's Kingdom"

Description

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Transcript

Children, you may wonder why we encourage you to memorize your scripture verses. It's a good habit. Part of the reason, it's not to develop your mental skill that you can do in school, hopefully it'll help with that, but that you know exactly what God's Word says.

Because already there's in Christendom a lot of manipulating of God's Word. You'll hear preachers say, I've sometimes seen little clips of messages that of a preacher saying something and saying God's Word says something and I know it doesn't say that. That's because I was taught at a young age to know exactly what God's Word says, not what the preacher says it says.

And for that you must know God's Word. And that's why we encourage you to memorize exactly what the Word of God is actually said. So that you'll remember, for example, this verse that we have up there.

Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man shall give you. I'm not going to speak on that, but here's a little encouragement I want to leave with you brothers and sisters this week. For whether you go to work outside the home or work inside the home, it's not for the food, can we pull that verse back up, it's not for the food that perishes.

Somebody asks you, why do you go to work? Most people, even most Christians would say to put food on the table. It's not biblical. The Bible says don't work for the food on the table.

But you say I'm working for the food which endures to eternal life and when I work for that, God will provide the food on the table. God will take care of the needs in the home. If in your heart he sees that you're not about making enough money to have a good life and have a nice house and all these things, you working for the food which the Son of Man will give you, which will endure to eternal life, and then he'll put the food on the table.

Isn't it much better that God puts the food on the table than that I do? And so I look at the food on the table and whether you cooked it or not, whether you worked and got money to buy the ingredients for it or not, you realize, Lord this week I was working for you. You were giving me spiritual food through the week and because I did that, here's food on the table for my children. They're doing well in school perhaps or not well, it's okay.

Much better that our children learn to work for the food which endures to eternal life. Oh dear children, can you remember that when you go to school this week or even if you're schooling at home? Sometimes my children ask me, what's the point of learning this? Here's the answer. The next time your children ask you, what's the point of this subject? Because Jesus wants me to learn it.

He wants through my learning of history or science or reading to give me something of eternal life. And yes, these are useful skills so that we need to survive in the home. So, but like I was saying children, one of the reasons we do encourage you, whether you come up here and say it, I think it's good that you do come up and say it because you'll learn boldness.

Someday I believe God is going to call many of you, if not all of you, to speak God's Word boldly. Not necessarily preaching, but to bear witness of God's, of the life of God in you through the power of the Holy Spirit. He wants you, sons and daughters, to prophesy.

That's the promise of the Holy Spirit. And if you never learn to do that while you are young, you'll be timid and shy. But think, what a wonderful privilege that as children you can come up here in front of everyone.

Something that many of us adults struggle with even, getting nervous to stand in front. But you're learning it at a young age. I hope you're thankful for that opportunity.

And coming up here and saying exactly what the Bible says, no twisting and turning and no adding and taking away. Exactly what the Bible says. Now sometimes we don't have the whole verse there.

That's so that you have enough that you can memorize and remember. But as I say often, I hope every week you go and actually look at that verse in the Bible. I'm not going to ask you to raise your hand, but how many of you actually went and looked at our reference for this past week during the week? I didn't.

I'll confess. And I'm convicted by that, sitting up here. But I tried to almost every week.

I'll be honest with you. But I didn't this week. I read a lot of other things in God's Word.

But I also had that verse on my phone. But I didn't actually go and look at it. And so I'm going to do that right after this meeting.

And for this verse, go to John chapter 6 and read that chapter. Read that verse in its context and see how when Jesus spoke these words, shortly after that, the multitude that had gathered to hear him left in stages. He said something and a whole bunch left.

And the church suddenly got empty. This is how Jesus builds his church, by emptying it of those who are not really interested in eternal life. Those who just want to work for the food.

He had just fed the 5,000. And he said, listen, I know you guys are just here because this is a nice church. You get food and all these other things.

But do you want the food that endures to eternal life? Then it doesn't matter whether you don't have lunch or not. See, do you think Jesus would have been happy if there was no food that afternoon? The multitude were upset, I think. They would have been miserable and always complaining, man, there's no meeting, no food, should have brought some food.

Everybody's looking at the boy who brought his lunch with jealousy. Thinking, man, he had a good mom, packed his lunch. But Jesus wouldn't have been unhappy at all.

If the Father allowed him to be in a situation where there was no food, it would have been perfectly okay. The Father would have given him something that strengthened him supernaturally. Jesus was living.

And who is your example in that story? What do you think? Is it the multitude who's sitting there just complaining why there's no food? I mean, Jesus didn't promise them food. But I'm sure they were complaining, how come there's no food around here? It brought us out into this wilderness and there's no food around here. Are you like the disciples who are like, we need money? You know, some churches are like that.

They have a donate button prominently on their website. We need money. Give money now.

Are you like the boy who says, here, here's my five loaves and two fish. I think it's different stages. Or are you following Jesus, for whom it didn't matter if there was food or not.

Didn't matter if he had packed his lunch or not. His Father was with him, and everything was going to be okay. He's my example.

He's the author and finisher of my faith. Not the boy with five loaves and two fish who planned ahead. Not the disciples who said, well, Lord, we'll follow you, but we still need money, right? And not even the multitude who just complained and came there and were around Jesus when it felt good and ran away when it didn't.

So that's our example is Jesus Christ. So read that story. Read those verses sometime.

I do hope at some point, maybe in a couple of weeks when I speak again to speak on spiritual authority. I had spoken a couple of messages on the marks of the presence of God in his church. And I do want to speak on spiritual authority.

But I had a burden from the Lord over the last couple of weeks to speak on something that I've been seeing in my own life. And I want to share out of my testimony. I hope it'll be an encouragement and an exhortation for all of us.

Let's turn to First John chapter four. I believe that in the danger that the danger in our pursuit of holiness, all of us, I believe in this room and listening to this message, I believe are here because we want to pursue holiness, we want to be more like Jesus. And in the pursuit of holiness, the danger is that we will become religious.

We'll become religious and not truly spiritual. It's a real, real danger. You know, if I said to you, there's a snake in this room somewhere.

If I said that to you, I guarantee you, all of you will stop listening to what I'm saying and say, Santos, you can't just keep going. We got to find the snake. It's a cobra or some venomous snake.

It's a rattlesnake. Deal with that. Then we can continue the meeting.

I believe religiosity is a much greater danger to us than any rattlesnake or cobra could be. Because it'll destroy us spiritually for all eternity. And it would be a tragedy, a tragedy, if we get to the end of our life sitting at a church like RLCF, and realize I was just religious.

I had the look of a good Christian. I had the look of a disciple. I had the look of being a New Covenant Christian.

And I compared myself to all the other churches where they had false teaching or other other things that they were missing, and didn't realize that I probably ended up in a worse condition than people who had wrong doctrine. So it's a real danger. And in 1st John chapter 4, I'm going to read these first six verses.

I also believe that most Christians don't know the difference between religious and spiritual, between religiosity and spirituality. If you met a religious person, and a spiritual person, if you met a religious person, who sounds spiritual, and looks spiritual, would you be able to know this is a religious person? They have all the right language, they look like they're good Christians, but deep down you taste of it. Let me give you an example.

If you saw an apple that looked absolutely, genuinely real, like a real apple, would you be able to look at it without even taking a bite into it and say, nope, that's not a real one. I know right away that's that's a false one. See, you can't take a bite into people, right? You can't see what's inside it.

If you give me two apples and they both look good, I'm probably going to bite into one and see. Can I actually bite into it? I can see, yeah, that's plastic, can't bite into it. This is real.

You can't see what's inside people's hearts. God has not allowed any of us to do that. I can't see into your heart, you can't see into mine, to see if what's inside this conversation and this space and this appearance of Christ-likeness is real Christ-likeness inside.

The only way then for us to know what real spirituality is, is if you're able to discern the spirit. When you see the actions of somebody and listen to their words and you observe their life and say, this is religiosity. I'll tell you, religiosity looks absolutely like true Christ-likeness on the outside.

Absolutely looks like true Christ-likeness. If you look at it on the outside, it looks like spirituality, but it's not. We must know the difference.

And so, John says through the Holy Spirit in 1st John 4, verse 1, beloved, O you who God loves so much, do not believe every spirit. He's not talking about demonic spirits. He's not talking about evil spirits in the

world.

He's talking about spirits in the church. Spirits in Christendom. Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God.

Because many false prophets, not false religions, false Christian prophets, many false prophets have gone out into the world, which means they came out from within churches. By this, you know the spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.

And every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the Antichrist. A lot of people are taken up with what the Antichrist will look like, who he is.

Is it so-and-so? Is it so-and-so? Is it this particular church denomination or something like that? No. What we are told to see is to test whether it is the spirit of the Antichrist. And whether I live to see the physical person who ends up being the Antichrist or not, whatever that looks like, I want to reach the end of my, until the end of my life, live knowing the spirit of the Antichrist.

If I don't know the spirit of the Antichrist, the Antichrist will come looking like Christ, preaching even the New Covenant, I believe. But it will be religious. This is the spirit of the Antichrist, he says in verse 3. Not, he doesn't say the Antichrist, the spirit of the Antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

You are from God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world. They are from the world. So this religious spirit is, its origin is from the world.

It's worldly-minded. It cares about the things of this world. Its interest is the things of this world, but it looks heavenly.

Inside, it's earthly-minded. Outside, it's heavenly-looking. They are from the world, therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them.

We are from God. He who knows God listens to us. He who is not from God does not listen to us.

By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. Many false prophets have gone out into the world, and I've fallen for religiosity. I've been religious myself, many times.

I've found religiosity in me, even recently, and I hate it. I tell you, I hate it so much, and that's where this burden is coming from. Alongside spirituality from the very beginning.

It's not a new thing. It's not like, oh, something's happening in the Christendom today in 2022. It's been there from the first pages of the Bible.

Cain was a religious man. Abel was a spiritual man. We're not told a lot in scripture about why God had regard for Abel and his sacrifice, and God did not have regard for Cain and his sacrifice.

I've heard theologians say that, well, Cain gave grain, or the crops, and God doesn't like crops, he likes meat. No, that's not true. It says that God had regard for Abel.

That means, it didn't matter what Abel put on the offering, it didn't matter what Cain put on the offering, it was what was inside their heart that God was looking at. The same thing happened thousands of years

later when Jesus was sitting in the synagogue, and he saw a bunch of people giving their offerings again. And here came people with lots and lots of money, and I imagine it like this, that the Pharisees brought only coins, because you can hear coins falling into the box, you can't hear bills, right? So they brought only coins, and lots of it, and made big, loud fanfare as they put their offering into the box.

And then quietly comes a little widow, and when nobody's looking, she just puts two mites into it. And God said, I saw what was in her heart, not how much she put into the offering box. And that's what God was pleased with.

So now when you come and say, Lord, I offer my life to you, everything I've been through, use it for your glory. He says, okay, that sounds good. Some of you may have been through bad things in the past, some of you may go through bad things in the future.

I don't know. It's not what you go through. God is looking for what's inside the heart.

He says, in your heart, is there a real desire for me to use it for your glory? Then I'll do it. And he will. So Cain was a religious man.

He brought an offering. The Pharisees were religious people. And God hates religiosity much more than he hates worldliness.

I really believe that. And I don't have scripture to back it up, but, you know, well, I do actually. Here's why.

Jesus said that the tax gatherers and the prostitutes would enter the kingdom of heaven long before the Pharisees would. To me, that tells me that God hates religiosity more than he hates worldliness. We speak a lot against sin in this church, and we will by God's grace, but we recognize that God hates religiosity even more.

And it's so easy for us to forget that religiosity is a hated thing. God detests it. And religiosity is the thing that will ultimately persecute true spirituality.

Murder came into the world because of religiosity. Think about it. Murder is perhaps the most worldly thing you can do, right? Murder.

Think about it. That's what they do out in the world. No, no, no, no, no.

True murder happens in the church by religious people persecuting spiritual people. Long before it happens in the world. What murder do you think offends God more? Is it that person with the gun shooting somebody else on the street to rob him? No.

Yeah, that offends God. God is more offended by the so-called Christian persecuting this religious person persecuting the spiritual person. God saw what Cain did.

And it was Cain's religiosity that led him to murder his brother Abel. Jesus. Have you thought about it? Jesus was not killed by, I think I said this a couple weeks ago.

He was not killed by the Romans, the godless Romans, or they worshiped their idols. He wasn't killed by the atheists. He wasn't killed by the worldly people of his day, the Greeks and the other people, the other religions that existed in Jesus' time.

He was killed by the religious people. And the true church of Jesus Christ, I believe even today and until the end, until Christ comes, will always be persecuted more by religious people than by the world. And that's what's my burden is that we are not, that we sense that we're able to discern the spirit of religiosity.

Paul says in 2 Timothy 3, now you know 2 Timothy 3 from the first few verses that we speak a lot about in this church as well, which is that difficult times will come. And he goes on, and we'll come back and look at that shortly. But I want you to see before that, that he says in verse 10, he tells Timothy that you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, and persecutions, verse 11, and sufferings such as happened to me at, then he lists a bunch of places.

And when I was thinking about that this last week, I went back and looked at, I have the advantage of a Bible that allows, that has a cross-reference. And if you have a Bible like that, I hope you use it. But if not, you can use a concordance or something like that.

When he says Antioch, go back and look at what happened in Antioch in Acts 13. Or he says Iconium, go back and look at what happened in Iconium in Acts 14. Acts 13, 14, 15, it all seems to happen almost in a sequence.

He goes from one place, Antioch, then he goes to Iconium, then he goes to Lystra. And if you read those stories, there was unbelievers in those towns that he was reaching, and he went to the synagogues, and when the Jews saw that Gentiles were being drawn to this gospel of life in Christ Jesus, they got upset. The religious people who were reading the same book that Paul was reading, the Torah, the Old Testament as we know it, they were the ones who persecuted him every single time.

And they were the ones that stirred up ultimately the Romans to kill Paul. So it was the religious people, when he talks about the persecutions that he endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me, he says in verse 11, you see that it was the religious people, beginning with Cain, all the way down and I believe even to this day. Now, true spirituality is rare, I believe.

It says, we read that verse in 1 John, for many false prophets, and many are drawn away by religiosity. It's much easier to be religious than to be spiritual, and the reason for that is because to be spiritual involves death. Death to our self-life.

If we don't experience death to our self-life, you can have religiosity. So, if you want to look spiritual, or if you don't want to die, if deep down you don't want to give up your self-life, you don't really hate your self-life, and you don't want to fall into the ground and die, you can have Christianity. A false Christianity that looks like Christianity.

Let me say that again. You can have a Christianity without dying to yourself, and that's how you'll be religious, and most of Christendom, I believe, is pursuing that, because it hurts to die. Imagine if it's physically, okay, that Jesus said, hey, listen, I'll give you an option.

You can come to heaven without dying, or dying. Which one would you pick? Of course, we're all going to say, well, Lord, just take me up like Elijah. Bring the chariots, Lord.

Swing low, sweet chariot, come and take me home. I'm ready to go. But death is what is always, pardon, I have to die.

People, when they get close to death, they're afraid of it. Any old person, no matter how young or old, any person that's about to go to heaven, if Jesus came to them and said, hey, I'll take you up without dying, oh, thank you, Lord, I don't have to go through death. Now, physically, it may not be that big of a deal.

Of course, you don't have to suffer physically, but spiritually, there's no other option. But the devil has come in through false prophets and preached an option, says, hey, listen, you can have the life of Christ without actually dying. Here's how.

And we're going to go through some of that. We'll talk about how. And what you end up with is a Christianity that's religious and not actually spiritual.

The only way we can have spiritual life in us, the real life of Christ, is if we die. Cain gave an offering, I believe. Abel gave himself.

To me, that's the essence. We're not told much about it, but I believe that the essence of true spirituality comes from this, that you can either give an offering to God, or you can give yourself. And that's also why we don't pass an offering bag or offering plate in the church, because God doesn't want your money.

He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. Do you think he's hard up for those \$10, or \$1, or \$100, or \$1,000 that you want to give him? No. He says, give me your life.

And the devil says, no, just put \$100 in the box and keep your life. And you end up with religiosity, and you think, well, Lord, but I gave so much to the church. The treasurer can even tell me exactly how much I've given, and I claim my tax for it, because I'm entitled to it, and all that stuff.

And look at this that I did, and that other thing that I did, but God says, no, but you didn't give me yourself. You held on to yourself. You gave.

You served. You did all these other things for other people, but yourself, life, you held on to. This is a danger, my dear brothers and sisters.

I've served the Lord. I have. But I found in myself recently the tendency to look back and think, well, Lord, I've done so much for you.

I want to keep doing it, and I'm going to keep giving to you. And God said, uh-oh, you're sounding like a religious person now. You're thinking back on what all you've done, and you're looking forward to whatever you will do, and God says, no, it doesn't matter what you do or don't do for me.

Just give me yourself. That's it. You won't write biographies written about you for that, but just give me yourself.

And the biographies of men and women that have inspired me the most are the ones that I've seen in them that they didn't go set out to do a great work for God. They didn't set out to do a great work for God. They just said, Lord, here's my life.

Do whatever you want with it. I don't care. And we live in a Christendom that's glorifying missionaries that are doing great things out there.

They have their pictures in the back. And neglect the missionaries in our homes that are changing diapers, and cooking meals, and cleaning dishes, and making sure the house is clean. Because that looks great,

and this just looks like, wow, what did you do for the Lord today? And God doesn't want to know from you what you have done for Him today.

He just says, have you taken up your cross? And if I put in front of you a life that looks empty, that looks ordinary, that looks seemingly inglorious, and just say, Lord, it's what you asked for me. That's all. What do you think that woman, see we're told a lot about that woman.

Jesus says that she out of her little has given everything. They out of their much have given a lot. She out of her little has given everything.

You see the difference between giving a lot and giving everything? A lot looks like this. Everything looks like this. Because God sees it's everything, but it's what you have.

It's little, but it's everything. And God says, that's what I want. I want everything, not a lot.

Oh, will you give that to Him? That's what I want to live. I want to live and reach the end of my life and say, Lord, it didn't matter how many people I preached to, or how big my church was, or how small. You had everything for me.

Every moment of my day was yours. And then it doesn't matter if you die at the age of 33 like Jesus did. He gave everything.

And there are others who are trying to live to 90, giving here and there. Philanthropists, after they make their billions and multi-billions, they say, I have so much. Go ahead.

And I'm not here to despise that. Please know that. I respect atheists and ungodly people in the world who give a lot and do a lot of good in society, but that's not the example I'm following.

I'm not trying to imitate the philanthropist and someday make so much money that I can go and feed the hungry and give water to the needy across the world. No, I want to give everything. Right now, today, I want to give everything.

That's the life that will be pleasing to God. Let's turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 4. I see so much in Christendom is captivated by the big, big churches, growth, success, this and that, looking back and seeing how much I've done. Oh, I read the testimony of Hudson Taylor and C.T. Studd and George Miller.

They weren't reflecting back and looking at how many orphans they had or how many people they want to Christ and keeping track of how many baptisms they've done. You never read that about them. They were the men.

William Booth. Godly men and women who were used by God. They just said, well, there's more to be done.

I'm going to C.T. Studd, that poem that he says, only one life, it'll soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last. I like how Zach's paraphrased that.

Only what Christ does through me will last. And if God gives you a short candle that burns quickly, a short candle, that means a short life, but it's empty at the end of your life. That's more pleasing to God than the big candle that burned 50%.

And you look at it quantitatively and say, well, this, this is actually more than this. God says, no, your ways are not my ways. I'm not looking for how much you can give me.

I'm looking that you'll give me everything. And there will be so many in heaven who will be great because they gave everything. And you look at it from an earthly standpoint and say, man, how is that more? Do you think the disciples thought that? They saw the woman put two little, it says the two cents she put in were worth a penny.

I mean, you don't even have a coin that's small enough to represent that in our society. Think about putting a half a penny. I think they used to have it in England back in the day.

You know, when a penny was worth a lot, you get a half a penny. She put two coins, the total of which was worth one penny. I think if I remember correctly, and she put it in quietly and God says, that's what I want.

I saw her heart. Second Corinthians four, we read in verse 10. See, like I said, this is, this is preaching that will get you persecuted.

I believe, I believe RLCF will experience persecution. Not necessarily long before it experiences persecution from the world, it will experience persecution from religious Christians who say, no, no, no, they're preaching a false doctrine. They're called whatever.

The preaching of the way to become spiritual is only by death. There's no other door. But there's plenty of other doors to get what looks like a new covenant church, even in a new covenant home and a new covenant life without real death.

And here's the thing, only you and the Lord Jesus Christ and Satan know whether you've actually died or not. Even, I think even your spouse doesn't know. Even Megan doesn't know if I'm actually dying.

She might see evidence of it. You don't know as much as you know me. You don't know if I'm actually dying inside.

God has hidden that. He's kept it secret. But one day all that is secret will be revealed and you'll find out whether I was actually dying or not by whether everything was given or not.

And you might think, well, Santo, he does so much for RLCF, he's always available. And God might see, well, actually, it looks like a lot, but he's self-centered. He likes the fact that people think he's a sacrificial person.

He likes the approval of people. I'm not like that, by the way. I'm just imagining that it could be like that.

And that's why I live in reverence and say, Lord, save me from religiosity. I tell you this, the more you do, the greater danger you are of being religious. The more sacrificial you are, the more you give yourself to your children or your husband or your wife or the more you do in the church, I'll tell you, the more you're in danger of being religious because your candle is growing and you might not be giving all.

I hope that as God, you know, one of the reasons I'm not very, very keen for our church to explode in terms of quantity is because the more my candle grows, now all of a sudden I have a greater responsibility that I give everything. I would rather I stay small and grow at God's pace, whether it's spiritually and my marriage, my home and even in the church that we grow as a church at God's pace so that everything is on the altar. Because I'll tell you, this that that's half burnt is worse than this that's fully burnt.

That's the essence of it. 2nd Corinthians 4 verse 10. You know, he says again before that, look at the look at the context.

We have this treasure in earthen vessels so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God. This is 2nd Corinthians 4 verse 7, not from ourselves. See, that's why because why God wants everything is because when you have everything, you give everything, you have nothing left to hold on to yourself.

Why is it that God wants 100%, not even 99%? You know, 100% of this is better than 99% of this. Why? Because that 99% is an indication that you held back 1% in unbelief. You thought, well, I can give you, you know, 99% is a lot.

Even if you gave 99%, it's not the quantity that matters. It's God looking at that 1% and says, why did you hold that back? It's an indication of unbelief that you said, well, Lord, I'll give you a lot, but I got to keep a little bit for myself because I have a feeling you're not going to come through. Some way I need to have a at least a 1% backup plan.

And that's what God hates. He sees that you're still got a little bit of self you're holding on to. It looks little, but it's everything to God.

That 1% is everything to God because it is self. And when we're fully emptied, we say, Lord, I've got one day to give you today. And it looks like what I'm going to be doing today is this and this other thing and that.

And then the children have to have this and that. It looks very ordinary. Nobody's going to write a biography about that.

But God says, ah, that's what I wanted. And the result of that, look at Paul's life. He was afflicted in every way, verse 8, but he was not crushed, perplexed, but not despairing, persecuted, but not forsaken, struck down, but not destroyed.

And look at this always. This is why Paul was a spiritual man and Demas was a religious man. Why Jesus was truly religious and the Pharisees who traveled land and sea to make a convert.

You know, Jesus didn't travel land and sea to make a convert. He did travel a little bit, but not as much as the Pharisees did. They did far more evangelism in terms of geographical distance than Jesus did.

Who do you think was more pleasing to God, to the Father? Jesus was. Why was it that Paul was spiritual? Why was it that Jesus had the most spiritual life, 100% spiritual life? Because he was, verse 10, always caring about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. It's so plain and simple that the only way we can have the life of Jesus, which is true spirituality, is if you're always caring about in the body the dying of Jesus.

He was not talking about physical death. It's this death to self. I'm just going to die to myself today.

It doesn't matter how God's going to work it out or people's going to take advantage of it or anything like that. Die with Jesus. Caring about in the body the dying of Jesus, the dying of Jesus, the dying of Jesus.

Little by little, inside was spiritual life. This treasure in an earthen vessel that was dying every day, so that the life also may be manifested in our body. I think what a wonderful thing it would be if ... I once said in this church, you might have heard me say it too, that I wish we had a sign out in the front, River of Life

Christian Fellowship.

Come here if you want to die. Come and die. If you want to die, come here.

They've got the funeral homes which are after you die. What about a place that says, if you want to die, come here? I remember once I said that and I got in trouble by it in this church actually by somebody said, no Jesus actually said to come and live. I thought about that.

Is that really true? Let me ask you a question. It's not a trick question. Ask yourself honestly, does Jesus say come and die or come and live? The difference is spirituality and religiosity.

Oh, we want life. Doesn't Jesus offer us life, abundant life, new covenant life? Oh, he does. But he doesn't say come and live.

He says come and die. Let's look at that. John chapter 10, right? Jesus says come and die and you will have life.

If Jesus said come and live, I would have to live. I would need some ability to live. That would be like me going to the cemetery over there and telling those dead people in the graves, come on, go ahead and live.

Come on, stand up. You dead person? No, they can't stand up. And what offends Jesus is the people who are pretending to be dead in the cemeteries, in churches.

They're pretending to be dead. Yeah, I died with Christ, but there's a little bit of me that's still alive. I still want a little bit for myself.

I still have love of money, love of self, love of pleasure. Just a little bit. I'm mostly dead, but not all the way dead.

And then I hear a preacher say, come live. And that little bit of me that has life stands up and says, yeah, I want life. A little bit more money? Yeah.

A little bit more health? Yeah, sure. Come and live. You can't tell a dead person to come and live.

What you can tell living people is to come and die and Jesus will raise you back to eternal life. That's the secret. And the difference between religiosity and spirituality is in that message.

They will have it and have it abundantly. That means you'll just be given it. You didn't live.

And I'll tell you, the world is full of religiosity that says you can have your best life now. There's actually a book like that. It says you can have life, good life, the good life, now.

And Jesus says no. When a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit.

He who loves his life, saying I want, Jesus said I can have life. Jesus said come and live. No.

Jesus says if you come because you want to live, it means you love your life and you'll lose it. Do you hate your life? Do you want to die? You hate your life that much that you just can't wait to die? Spiritually, I mean. And everything else is great.

I mean the family's great. You've got enough money in the bank and your job's going well. But you want to die.

You're sick of this self-centered flesh. Sick of the love of money. Sick of the love of pleasure.

It says I want to be done with this old life. Jesus says okay, come and die. He who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.

You'll have eternal life. So, not come and live, but come and die and you'll have it. And I've thought of it like this that the difference between religiosity and all legalism stems from religiosity and spirituality is like the difference between a bride who really loves her husband and a bride that's pretending.

So, think about it. A real wife and a pretend wife. A real wife and a pretend wife.

A real wife, when she does something for her husband, she doesn't care if anybody else sees it. I mean, have you ever heard of a wife, let's say one of your wives coming to you, or have you ever heard, I'll use Megan as an example, sorry Meg. Have you ever heard her come to you and tell you, hey, I made my husband a really good meal today.

Have you ever heard her do that? No, because she's a real wife. None of your wives have ever done that. Come to me and say, I made my husband a wonderful eggs and toast and bacon and all this stuff.

No, that's a pretend wife. That's a wife that wants a reputation as a wife. Says, yeah, oh, what a good wife.

See what all she did and that other thing. That's a pretend wife. I use that example to say that that's spiritually the case as well.

Pretend brides of Christ. Pretend wives are the ones who are saying, oh, I've done this, I've done that other thing and they like the reputation, they like the appearance in the church for what all they've done. And the real bride says, Lord, I don't care.

Nobody sees it. It's for you. It's before you.

You alone saw it. I was doing it for you anyway. And it's the pretend brides of Christ that are building a religious church today.

You know there's another bride of Christ. It's not the real bride of Christ, but it's the pretend bride of Christ. It's the religious church, Babylon it's called.

It's the religious church that is full of activity like the church in Ephesus became. Is it possible to once upon a time be the bride of Christ that loves Jesus so much? And it's all about Him. And as we grow and as God blesses us to eventually become the pretend bride of Christ.

It happened. Let me show you. It's happened many, many times.

Revelation chapter 2. The difference between the pretend bride and the real bride of Christ. They have the marriage certificate framed on the wall. Married to Jesus Christ on such and such a date.

Living in His house. To the church in Ephesus, he writes in verse 1. Skip down to verse 2. I know your deeds. Oh, I know you made me the best meal that I could have had.

I know your toil. I know you got up early in the morning to do it. I know your perseverance.

I know that you just kept at it. I'm using physical analogy for the spiritual. Things got burnt, but you went back and started over again.

I know all that you did. And I know that you cannot tolerate evil men. And you put to test those who call themselves apostles and they are not.

And you found them to be false. And you have perseverance. Oh, you've been a church for 20 years now.

And you have endurance. And you've endured for my name's sake. And you've not grown tired.

You've faced opposition. And you're growing strong. And all these things.

But he says, but dear person who calls yourself my wife, I can see through it all. You've left your first love. You're a pretend wife now.

Yeah, you come to the meetings. And you're there. And you serve.

And you do that. But you're a pretend bride. Everybody else thinks you're the bride.

Everybody else thinks that you're a wonderful brother or a wonderful sister. But I see. I see by your actions.

I see by your motives. I see what's in your heart. And I see you're a pretend bride.

The love's not there. God knows it. You know it.

And the devil knows it, I believe. The devil is a student of human character and human behavior. And he knows.

He can tell when the love's gone. And he wants you to go to sleep. He wants you to think, hey, the works are okay.

You know what happened to the church in Ephesus? They fell asleep amidst all the activity. Oh, they were busy. You think it's possible to be spiritually asleep and yet religiously active? Listen to this carefully.

Is it possible to be religiously active but spiritually asleep? Oh, yes. That's why it's a danger. I'm doing a lot, but it's a dream.

Think about it. Have you ever had a dream where you're running a marathon? And you're like, man, I'm tired. Running and running and doing this workout.

And you went to the gym and all that. And you wake up and realize I was asleep the whole time. The muscles didn't grow at all because it was just a dream.

And in that dream, all this activity, it's going on in churches and it's a danger for us. River of Life Christian Fellowship, I believe it with all my heart. It's a danger for me.

Perhaps as one who does a lot in this church. I could be doing a lot. I'm pedaling the peloton, the bicycle, and I'm running the treadmill and all that spiritually.

But it's just a dream. I'm asleep spiritually. And God, the Holy Spirit said to John, go wake up that church and tell them, I'm going to remove your lampstand.

Repent. Wake up. I'm coming soon.

And you don't want to be caught when Jesus comes realizing that all this activity was just a dream. I did nothing for him. Let's go back to 2 Timothy 3. This is what Paul calls the form of godliness.

We read in verse 10 onwards, but in verse 5, he talks about the form of godliness without power. Here's a paraphrase of that. 2 Timothy 3 verse 5, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power.

You know, that's like having a badge that says married to Jesus, so that everybody can see it, but inside it's not there. Again, let me use the example of wives. Do any of your wives say, married to my husband? You know, like a little badge or something, a little bracelet.

In some parts of the world, they wear something that's an indication that they're married. Like for us, it may be the wedding ring. In some places, the women wear like a necklace.

That means you're married. That's an indication of it. Let me ask you this.

Are you just wearing the wedding ring with Jesus, but the love's not there? It's much better to not have a wedding ring at all because you can't afford it, but love me, Lord. It doesn't matter whether other people know that I'm married to you or not. You know it.

And I do everything for your sake, for your glory, that you will receive honor and your name will be exalted and that I will have simple, pure devotion to you and that's it. I don't have to do some great thing for you. I want to give you everything.

My love for you, Lord. So this namesake wife, you know, I would paraphrase this form of godliness, but denying its power. It's like having the name that you're married to Christ, but you're not really married.

The power, that power is in the life. You could have the same attitude in a church. You could say, I'm a member of RLCF, but your heart's not here.

It's happened in this church, I tell you. It's happened. I have nothing against people who have left this church and I'm not saying that you should stay in this church for the rest of your life.

If God wants you somewhere else, please leave. I would not hold you back if God wants you in a different church. But if God wants you here and you leave, and you leave because you get offended or something, this or that or something else is not the way you want it.

But it's possible to sit in this church and I've seen that pattern. I've been in this church and even in the church I grew up in where something happens. Love starts to go and yeah, they're still fulfilling their religious responsibility as members in the church and they're showing up and then the attendance starts to wane a little bit and they start getting here and there and there.

I guess I should show up every now and then and I guess I need to stay here and there. I need to do this, I need to do that. That's the reason you're here.

Oh brother, sister, I hope you'll find a church where God wants to plant you and you'll do it out of love. And if he keeps you here, which I hope he will, that you'll do it out of love. That that love is there.

It says, Lord, I'm not thinking about the minimum that I need to do. Do I need to come to at least two or three meetings? You do the math, I can come to seven meetings a month and I'll be good, keep my membership. I don't think any of you do that, by the way, but that's what's going on in Christianity.

And if you sense that spirit coming into your heart, catch it. It's a quick spiral where you go down into a religious life where you're just coming along in the church, not really experiencing the life of Christ. Think about it with evangelism.

I thought about, I was thinking about this recently, you know, it says in Matthew 23. Let me show you that verse real quick. Matthew 23 verse 15.

I referenced it earlier. It says that these Pharisees, religious people, will travel over land and sea to make one convert. Matthew 23 verse 15.

Woe to you. Listen to this. Listen to God saying, you traveled around on sea and land to make one convert, but I say, woe to you.

Woe to you, evangelist. You went all the way to the other end of town to make one convert. He says, why? Well, I went and made a convert and I got him to sign the card and gave him baptism and all that.

He says, woe to you, because you were a religious person. And I thought about that even in how we do evangelism, you know, there's a lot of evangelists that are going around trying to save people because they feel sorry that they're going to go to hell. This is religiosity.

Are you keen to save people because you feel bad for them that they're going to go to hell? Now that's, it's okay, but that's not spirituality. Spirituality is I'm burdened by the dishonor that that person's life is bringing to God by his sin. Whether he goes to hell or not is not as important as the fact that God is dishonored by his life.

And long before you point your finger at him and see the dishonor that God is getting because of his life, you look at your own life and realize, Lord, I'm bothered by the dishonor I brought to your name by how I spoke to that person, to my wife this morning. And the Pharisees didn't care about God's honor. They didn't care how they lived in secret, but they would go to the other end of town to give somebody the gospel.

And this is going on in Christendom today. Evangelism. While their marriages are falling apart, their children are wayward.

And oh, the religious talk is there. Traveling land and sea. But God says, you're not, you're not concerned about my, my name.

And I pray, dear River of Life Christian Fellowship, that as a church family, our burden to win the lost will come from seeing the glory of God and his, the honor, the dishonor that's brought to his name by my life, perhaps by my, my marriage, my home, our church, and, and the world around us. And say, Lord, you must save that person that's crossing the street because the way he's living his life is a dishonor to you. This is the bride that's in love with Jesus, not somebody that just wants to add people to their church and

get people to sign a decision card and get them to pray something so that I can brag about, hey, look, 10 people got converted today by the little thing that I said.

Oh, that's religiosity. It's garbage. It will burn up when Jesus comes.

Religious people are interested in heaven. They want to go to heaven because they love themselves. Spiritual people are interested in the kingdom of heaven.

Righteousness, peace, joy, which means, Lord, I don't care what happens to me at the end of my life, whether I go to heaven or hell. Give me righteousness. Give me your life.

Give me true joy, Lord. Give me your peace. Which means that if you end up throwing me into hell, it'll be okay because I have your life.

I have the kingdom of heaven within me. And such a person will be welcomed. An abundant entrance will be given to him in heaven, it says.

2 Peter 1, I believe. An abundant entrance. The gates will swing wide open, it says.

Such a person has life. And you'll sit there and think, well, Lord, what did I do? I read the biographies of Paul and this other brother, that other sister, and what all they did. Now, what did I do? He says, you gave everything.

You had my righteousness. You had my life. You had my joy.

You suffered with all your heart like a treasure that was worth giving up everything. Let me ask you an honest question, brothers and sisters. If God gave you the opportunity to go be a famous missionary on the other side of the world or to have his joy in your home, what would you pick? I'm going to ask you again.

Examine your heart. If God gave you the opportunity as a housewife, let's say, or as a single woman or a single brother or a husband to go to the other end of the world and be a missionary for him or to have his righteousness and his peace and his joy in your home in quietness, what would you pick? The difference is that between religion and spirituality. That's it.

Oh, I know. I'm not trying to point a finger at you. I know.

That seems more appealing. Oh, I have a burden for the lost. I want to go preach here and preach there because I have a burden for the lost.

It's garbage. It's humbug. It's hypocrisy.

A lot of what I see in Christendom as a burden for the lost is really just, it may be just I like to preach somewhere. I've met plenty of that. They just want an opportunity to preach somewhere.

Or it may be even, I'm willing to give the benefit of the doubt to some, that they really care that that person's going to go to hell. But neither of those is spirituality. Spirituality says, Lord, I've seen your nature.

I've seen your kingdom. And it starts with me, Lord. Judgment must begin with the household of God.

It starts with me, Lord. I dishonored you today by what I did and what I said. I dishonored you with that thought.

Cleanse me, Lord. Purify me completely and then take me to do whatever with whoever. And God says, that will be more valuable to me in eternity because you gave everything to me.

I think I'll end there. It could be a good idea. You say, OK, religious, spiritual.

I understood it here. I would have failed in my calling if that's all we get out of it. I want to be spiritual, brothers and sisters.

That's it. Whether I continue to be an elder in this church or whatever, wherever God's calling me, I want the life of Christ. Whether people see it or not, whether people accuse me of false things and all that, it means less and less to me.

I perhaps receive more accusations and things have been said and written about me in the last three, four years than ever before, before that. But I tell you, I've become more joyful. I've experienced more peace and more righteousness in my life because I'm interested in the kingdom of heaven even more than heaven itself.

Let's be such a church. Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/xeSXJSCC91E.mp4>

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