

The Nicolaitan Conspiracy

by Steve Gallagher

The Nicolaitan Conspiracy refers to the lie that you don't have to obey God, which is being propagated in the church through avoidance of talk of sin and obedience, and through the use of psychology and psychotherapy to blame past victimization for sin.

Duration: 57:50

Scripture: 1 John 2:3

Topics: "Church Deception", "Obedience To God"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of obedience to God's laws as a true expression of love for Him. It addresses the deception of the great apostasy, revealing the lies that undermine obedience and the need to confront sin within the church. The sermon highlights the subtle ways deception enters the church through half-truths, victim mentalities, and assaults on Scripture by the emergent church, urging believers to discern the truth and stand firm in obedience to God despite cultural influences.

Transcript

Good morning, everyone. Praise the Lord. What a wonderful worship service.

I don't know about you, but that song, Sweet Will of God, just reduces me to, I don't know what. I could say tears, but it's more of an inward thing. Sweet Will of God.

If you'll open up your Bibles to Revelation 2, I'll be getting there pretty soon. I love the meetings at Pure Life Ministries because, first of all, Jesus Christ is the one who is glorified here. Not any man, not any other person, but Jesus.

And His Spirit controls these meetings, by and large. Not completely, we're fallible and we make mistakes sometimes and so on, but the Lord leads in these meetings. And we've already, once again, countless times we've seen this, the Lord preparing for the sermon through someone else, someone else's message.

What's happening here? Bring your mic down. I'm sorry. You should be.

He's deeply sorry. Go back and repent, would you? I want to talk today about the great lie of the great apostasy. There is a lie that is being propagated that is paving the way for the great apostasy.

And you are affected by it, witnesses of it, probably much more than you realize. And I hope to expose it for what it is here today in such a way that you won't forget. I said in one of my books, I think it was Intoxicated with Babylon maybe, but I said that there is a wave of deception coming upon this earth like a tidal wave.

And I suppose that will end up being true before it's all over with. But before the tidal wave comes, there is a swelling of the tide. And that's what we're experiencing now, a swelling of the tide of deception.

And I'm not talking about out in the world. That's there, of course. It's always been there.

I'm talking about in the church, at least in the Western church. And I'll tell you what the lie is right up front, so you understand what I'm getting at here with this message. Here is the lie in its barest form, and you'll never hear this said from a pulpit.

Not this explicitly, but as I'll go on to prove to you and show you, it is expressed in a thousand ways in the church. The lie is you don't have to obey God. That's the lie.

And if you prove yourselves to be a good audience here today, I'm going to also later on expose the inside world of a false prophet. So we'll see how good of an audience you are and if I'll do that for you or not. So if it doesn't happen in this message, you'll know that you've got to work on your response to Pastor Steve a little bit, right? Make sure you laugh at all my jokes.

Lots of amens. In 2 Thessalonians 2, where the Apostle Paul is talking about the great apostasy, he mentions a very profound, well, he makes a statement, just kind of almost in passing. He mentions the mystery of lawlessness.

The mystery of lawlessness. In other words, there's something about this, the term in the Greek is *onomos*, it's without the law, in the bare literal meaning of it. There's something about that at work in the end times church that is mysterious.

It's profound, it's enigmatic, it's not understood very clearly. It's not seen very clearly. It's a mystery and it'll be a mystery to everyone who doesn't have eyes to see, who doesn't have a discerning heart.

It will stay mysterious. But if you have a discerning heart, I could put it this way in what Jesus said, I think it's in John 7, he said, you know, if you will obey God, if you will do his commandments, you will know what the truth is. And that is true, that you will become so discerning as you grow in obedience to the Lord.

You become more aware of the reality of what's happening in the world and in the spiritual realm. Jesus said in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24, he said, many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. You believe that? He said, because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold.

But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. You believe that? All right. Now, the title of my message is The Nicolaitan Conspiracy, The Nicolaitan Conspiracy.

That's an intriguing title, isn't it? I wonder if I'll have a message that'll come up to the full weight of that title. We'll see. Now, you know, I'm going to read a couple of passages here in Revelation 2, but just before I do that, let me just mention that the book of Revelation is an end times book.

And everything in it pertains, especially so to the church of the end times. That would be you and me. Okay, so everything in the book of Revelation, this is one of the reasons I have studied it for thousands of

hours, because it is a special word to the believers of the end times.

And I want that book in me from beginning to end. I want the message of that book to resonate in my inside world, in my inner man. I want my heart permeated with the message that Jesus brought forth in the book of Revelation, and especially these other end time passages.

And so everything expressed to these seven churches is also a message to the church of the end times. And, you know, I can't go through all of that now, but I can touch on a couple little things that really is very much what we're talking about. Hearing this message to the church of Ephesus, and of course he kind of scolds them for losing their first love or walking away from their first love, but he commends them for something.

And I want to show it to you real quick. Verse two, I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men. And you put to the test those who call themselves apostles.

In other words, they bring themselves into this position and present themselves in this way, as if they are apostles. And they are not, and you found them to be false. So in other words, Jesus is watching.

He knows who's who. He knows the reality of who's preaching the truth and who's lying to people. He sees it all very clearly from his throne, and this Ephesian body was becoming increasingly more aware.

Why? Because they were discerning. They had discernment, and they were obedient to the Lord for the most part. And so they were aware, these people who have come in here and presented themselves to be our teachers, our spiritual leaders, there's something not right with them, and we are not going to put up with that in this body.

That was the attitude they had. Here they are defined in verse six. Again, Jesus is commending them.

He says, this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. Jesus doesn't say he hates these men. He hates the spirit they're in.

He hates what they're doing. He hates what they're teaching. Now, in regards to this lie that's being propagated in the church.

There's two reasons, really, primarily, that it's so powerful. One is that it's built on half-truth. Much of it is.

And that's the most powerful deception, is when there's truth involved. So they'll take some portion of truth, which we all understand, oh, that's a true thing. And they will build on that, but from that pure foundation, then they add all this other junk, and they twist and corrupt what began as a pure truth.

Now, in this case, for this lie, the truth is that we are saved by grace. That is true, absolutely true. You know, the opposite of that is what Paul was constantly battling in his day, some 30, 40, 50 years before this, which was the lie of legalism that the Judaizers brought forth.

So Paul was, you know, that was the great heresy of his day, and he fought it with all his heart, and some of the strong things he says about grace are to refute that lie on the other side. See? So now that Paul is gone, Jerusalem has been decimated by the Romans, and life has gone on almost 30 years after Jerusalem is destroyed. Judaism as it was is gone, so Judaizers are gone.

So now the enemy brings in this lie of antinomianism through the Greek culture. Antinomianism just means without the law. So, you know, now it's on the other side of the spectrum.

So there's a truth there that we're saved by grace, but there's also another half to that. It isn't just that. The other part of that is if the Holy Spirit of God is living within you, there's something compelling you to live a holy life, to obey God, and to say that it's all grace and to totally focus on that makes it into a lie, because it's not the whole truth.

It's part of the truth, absolutely, but it's not the whole truth. A.W. Tozer said, Salvation without obedience is a self-contradictory impossibility, because the essence of sin is rebellion against divine authority. You know, you can be in unrepentant sin in the evangelical church.

You can do that, but you can't do it in God's kingdom. The second reason that these lies are so powerful is because they are so subtle, usually subtle. You know, they're just kind of woven in.

In fact, the most powerful part of this lie, that you don't have to obey God, is simply because preachers don't preach it. They don't confront sin anymore. Or if they do it, they do it in such a generalized way, such a low-key way, or they aim it at the culture, which is a popular way to deal with sin.

Oh, those people out there. They don't confront the sin of the people in their church, the people that are supposed to be under their care. Now, I'll say this, that most of this is because this is what people want.

It's hard to be a godly pastor. I'll tell you that. It is hard.

I feel bad for these guys. I have sat and talked to so many pastors over the years who are sincere men, godly men, want to do right, but if they try to preach about sin, not that they need to do it every week, but have a balanced diet, they're feeding their sheep, you know, and so occasionally they bring a message about, you know, whatever, unforgiveness, let's say. You know, if they try to do that, boy, you want people to turn on you, start to expose what's in them, what they don't want to give up, and that goes for people who write books.

It goes for radio preachers across the board. They feel the pressure to bring soft messages, and now I'm going to read these two verses. You all know them very well, and I fear that because we know these verses so well, they've lost the reality.

What should strike terror in our hearts, because this is talking about the church that you and I call home. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths. You know, the bottom line for a lot of Christians out there, their attitude is, don't preach the truth to us because we will not put up with it.

I hate to say it, but it's the way it is. It's just the way it is nowadays. All right, now, mostly this deception is being propagated by avoidance.

You know, just avoiding talking about sin, teaching about all the different kinds of, you know, things about the Christian faith and so on, just leaving this whole large area out of the picture. That's mainly how it's being propagated within the body of Christ. And I say the body of Christ, I mean the Christian church at large.

The body of Christ is in there. There are real believers, of course, in the church. But also, there are some avenues that the enemy has created that has allowed him to come in with this lie and bring it more forcefully.

And I want to touch on three of them just to be a little more specific in what I'm sharing with you about this end times deception, okay? Okay, just want to make sure you're awake and listening. Really? Don't say that to Steve Gallagher. Okay, number one.

I'm going to call it, now, before I even use the C word here, you guys know, I believe, that we do our utmost here at Pure Life Ministries not to do anything that makes it a struggle for people of a different denominational background. You know, we just try our best to not cause disunity or anything. You know, whatever your denominational background, you're welcome here.

The truth that we are bringing forth, we just avoid those kinds of issues for the most part until it crosses these lines, and then I have to deal with it. And this is one of those things. Okay, so I'm going to call this the one pillar of Calvinism.

All right, so I've got three avenues for this lie to make it into the church, and this is the first one I'm going to mention is the one pillar of Calvinism, and let me explain that. I have spent the last 30 years studying the men of God from 100 years ago, 150 years ago, and I would say at least half of those men were of the Reformed tradition. Okay, so I have thoroughly enjoyed their teachings.

There's something about godly Calvinists that I just love and am drawn to, and there's two of these pillars that kind of go hand in hand, and the first one is what I'm talking about that I love about them is that they understand what a conversion looks like. They have a, there's a long tradition in Calvinist circles of strong conversions, and their idea of a conversion is you are going one way, living for self-will, and you get arrested by the Holy Spirit of God. You fall on your face.

You have complete repentance. You renounce your past life of sin, of self-will, of pride, of doing your own thing. You totally turn away from that, and you go 180 the other direction.

It doesn't mean that you're walking in perfection all of a sudden. It means that there has been a revolution has occurred inside you. Regeneration, amen.

Okay, that's what I love. I love that. Now along with that is their, what they have held is the, the, what do you call it, the belief in eternal security, and the way that they teach it, in what I'm describing, I don't have a bit of a problem with that.

You know, I am good with that. I don't know exactly how all that works out. I'm not going to claim to have the final answers on that, but I can understand what they're saying, that if you've had that kind of conversion, you're never going to go back.

Sin will never be able to hold you. You will not stay in sin if you go off track or something. God's Spirit is inside you, and He will make sure you get back on track.

You know, I'm good with that. It's not exactly the way I tend to think, but I don't have a problem with that whatsoever. Eternal security, okay, praise the Lord.

If that's what you believe, absolutely, you know, it's good with me. But this has been corrupted. Let me read something that I wrote about the apostasy.

It's on the Eternal Weight website, and I'm going to call it the One Pillar of Calvinism. That's not what it's called on the website, and I'm kind of cutting into a thought here, okay? Just bear with me. Let me read this.

Part of this comes from a centuries-old doctrinal system that went bad. It began as a solid offshoot of Reformed theology, emphasizing the eternal security of a believer and stressing the fact that true faith in Christ is always accompanied by true repentance, heart-probing, sin-renouncing, life-transforming repentance. All right, so the two go hand in hand.

Over the years, the once-saved, always-saved doctrine was vigorously maintained and defended, while the emphasis on meaningful repentance and inward obedience was increasingly neglected. By the time Charles Spurgeon came along in the latter part of the 19th century, he lamented that his denomination was going downhill at breakneck speed, his words. Today, the spiritual deterioration of this great movement is evident in thousands of postmodern churches that offer a form of Christianity which expects very little in the way of change, all the while assuring its members that their salvation is secure, guaranteed, and irrevocable.

Are you understanding what I'm saying? Yeah, it started off good, right? Yeah, when you have a real conversion, repentance, you're going to live your life for God, okay, eternally secure, I'm with you on that. But little by little, the first part went away, and all that was left was that assurance, the blessed assurance we sing. Yeah, well, I'm telling you, this is one of the avenues that this lie has made its way into the church, that they've maintained the blessings of salvation, supposed salvation, and have done away with the obligations and requirements that are involved with a true conversion.

Okay? So nothing against Calvinism, right? But here's where part of that whole movement has gone astray. All right, number two. The second avenue the enemy is using into the church for this lie is the victim mentality of psychotherapy.

Now let me just kind of give you a brief little quick history. Psychology, as a study, did not even begin until this whacked-out Jew about a hundred and however many years ago, Sigmund Freud, and another guy right behind him, Carl Jung, developed this whole way of trying to understand people's emotional problems. And so if you ever read any of their writings, you would think, these guys were just plain nuts.

You know, it's crazy stuff. And even the realm of psychology has moved on past it. No one embraces psychoanalysis, which Freud came up with.

And Carl Jung, he was taught by demons. He comes right out and says the spirit guides led him into his teachings. So if you want to get involved in that, that's up to you.

But I'm telling you, that's where psychology started around the turn of the 19th century. And then it developed, you know, grew stronger in the academic world. And, you know, they added all these theories.

Now there's 300 or 400 different theories about how to fix people and so on. And in the 60s, a man named Clyde Naramore introduced all of this into the church. And he was a smooth talker.

He was a good talker. And he was on the radio and he brought all these teachings in and it all sounded so sound. And, oh, these men make a lot of sense, which they do, to the unregenerated ear, I guess.

And then behind him came a man named James Dobson who absolutely took it over the top. James Dobson made psychology, gave it so much credibility. He became probably the most influential man in the church during the last half of the 20th century.

Yeah, in the church. He was bigger than Billy Graham even. You know, had that much influence in the church.

And you do not realize how much what he has brought into the church has affected your life. Some of the mentalities. Now in my book, *Standing Firm Through the Great Apostasy*, I dealt with why we have lost the power of God in the church.

And I'm going to read one paragraph out of here that'll help kind of give a little bit of more background on this. My purpose here is not to, you know, I'm not in this to try to somehow refute Christian psychology and psychotherapy and all that. I'm just trying to show you how this one lie has made it into the church so strongly.

Okay, so this is part of it. The last factor in this corporate loss of God's power is simply the effect of 30 plus years of turning to the worldly answers psychology has provided for defining and treating people's personal problems. Placing heavy stress on the quality of a person's upbringing has enabled many to conclude that their sinful behavior is merely the direct result of past victimization.

This belief system has so overtaken the church that even people in the most blatant forms of sin are now convinced of their own innocence because in some way or another they have been victimized by others. This unwillingness to accept personal responsibility for their actions causes them to bypass the repentance that will bring them into true freedom. A ploy from hell.

Who wants to, you know, admit to being wrong? No one does. I don't like being wrong. I don't like to say I'm wrong.

It's in our natural fallen nature to avoid that. But if you want to change, if you want the Holy Spirit to cleanse you and to renew you inside and to give you new life, I'm sorry, but that's just part of the package. You have to come forth, as we've already heard this morning.

You have to confess your sins, forsake your sins, acknowledge them as sin. Not find someone else to blame. You know, if we're victims, then we're not culpable for our actions.

If I do what I do because I was victimized, and I was 50 years ago, I was brought up in a lousy home life, but if I would have stayed on the track that I was taught when I was young, I would still be in sin. There would be no Pure Life Ministries. At least not by me.

This teaching has undercut the Holy Spirit's ability to bring conviction for the wrongness of sin, for those who listen to it anyway. And again, it's subtle. You're not going to hear a Christian psychotherapist on the radio, or you're not going to read it in one of his books.

He's not going to come out and say, sin is wrong, you know, I mean, it's okay to sin. He's not going to come out and say that. But what he'll do is they will de-emphasize taking responsibility for your sin, and

they will emphasize just constantly belaboring this thing of you're a victim.

Now, here's the reality, guys. Most of the sin issues that we deal with are self-propagating, is that right? Is that the right word? They just, they keep adding and adding, you know? In other words, most of our problems are a result of sin, not the cause of sin. Now, I'm not going to deny that, you know, having a lousy upbringing, you know, that it doesn't affect the way you do life.

It does, but the truth is we're all sinners by nature. Whether you came from a good home or a lousy home, you have the propensity to sin. And if you start giving over to sin, it propagates in your life and in your heart more.

And sin takes a toll on you, on your emotional life. The way of the transgressor is hard. And, you know, take any criminal in the penal system.

He's been involved in crime, robbing banks, whatever, and, you know, when you're in that kind of a lifestyle, it's hard. It's a hard lifestyle. I was a criminal once.

I understand what that's like. It's hard. There's just a lot of junk that comes with that.

But where does it start? Well, you might, you know, try giving up robbing banks. Life might get a little easier for you. The way of the transgressor is hard, you know, and it's just the reality of sin.

All right, number three, the third avenue, is the assault on scripture by the emergent church. Again, let me kind of paint the background of this. Probably 15 years ago or so, I don't claim to be an expert on this, but I think it was about 15 years ago, there were some certain pastors or church leaders or whatever that started recognizing the disenchantment of the younger generations.

What had happened was the church in the 70s went through a period of will, renewal, and even revival, and a lot of people got saved. I got saved in 1970, my wife in 1979. A lot of people our age got saved during that Jesus People movement of those days, and it was powerful, it was wonderful, it was the Lord.

But then, you know, as time went on and the worldliness got into the church, the compromise and, you know, things continued down that path. And then these people are raising their children up, and they've kind of lost the fire, if they had it in the first place, whatever, they're compromising. And their kids aren't blind to this, they're watching their parents say one thing, but not really live up to it.

You know, half-hearted commitment. And the kids are like, I don't want any part of this hypocrisy. I don't need that.

You don't even believe what you say you believe. I mean, that's the attitude in the young people. And who can blame them? You know, they see the deadness of the apostate church.

They see it for what it is, and they're not interested in it. And so these guys came in, but instead of bringing them to the cross, bringing them into a vibrant life in Christ, where there's joy, where there's power, instead of bringing them into that kind of Christianity, their method was to tap into the disenchantment of the young people and start accusing the word of God of not really being relevant to today's culture. And it really resonated with these young people.

And it just exploded across the land and has had a very terrible, terrible influence on the younger generations especially. Now let me just give you a couple of examples real quick. Let's talk about the hot

topic of homosexuality real quick.

You know, I don't know how anybody could read the Bible with a sincere heart and have the shred, a shred of doubt about what God's word says about homosexuality. It says it. It's just as plain as could be.

Those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. I don't know how more plain it could be. But you know, when you want to be deceived, lies look pretty plausible, don't they? I want to read something Brian McLaren, one of the leaders of the emergent church movement, I want to read something he said about homosexuality.

Watch how he just takes a strong stand against it, stands for the word of God, stands for truth. Just let me read this and let you see what you think. If we think that there may actually be a legitimate context for some homosexual relationships, we know that the biblical arguments are nuanced and multilayered and the pastoral ramifications are staggeringly complex.

We aren't sure if or where lines are to be drawn, nor do we know how to enforce with fairness whatever lines are drawn. There's a man who really stands for truth, right? Just a bunch of disingenuous nonsense. Will someone please stand up and call sin, sin? What about the painful subject of hell? Something that any caring human being cringes at, including myself, the thought of loved ones who haven't bowed their knee to Jesus Christ, going to that place, is a horrible thought.

I can hardly take thinking about it. But I'm not going to let my emotions be bigger or have more weight in my life than what the word of God says. Jesus is the one who talks about hell more than anyone else.

He is the judge, and whatever he says is the way it is. Whether I like it or not, you know, what he says is truth. The reality is we don't understand everything about these things, but I know this, you will never hear me refute anything that Jesus says.

Rob Bell knows better than Jesus, though, and he wrote a book called Love Wins. Man, that sounds encouraging, right? I need that kind of encouragement. Love Wins.

All it is, really, it's a repackaging of universalism, a lie that's been around for a long time. You know, when these guys, with their emotional outlook on Christianity, instead of basing it in Scripture, they base it in their feelings, and so they develop these theories. Oh, I know how it's going to work out.

Somehow the Lord's going to save everyone before it's over with, so there's no need for a place called hell. Well, excuse me, if there's no need, then why does Jesus talk about it? I would like to think that was true. Of course there's a part of me that would love for that to be the case, but I'm sorry the Word of God says it's there, and my experience confirms it, that there are people like this young man who walked out of this place, if he doesn't change his ways, he is headed for that place.

I don't want to think about that, but I've experienced it too much in my years of ministry, the reality that there are many people, most people, who reject God. They don't want Him telling them what they can do with their lives. Now, you guys have been doing pretty good here, so I'm going to see if I can't get myself out of this frame of mind, and get myself into another frame of mind just for a second.

What does the inside world of a false teacher look like, I wonder. Now, first of all, let me present the outside world. These guys come across with such confidence and charisma.

You know, the self-confidence that they have is because they don't know what it means to be humbled in the dust by God. And when you haven't been humbled on your face before this almighty God, it's very easy to be self-confident. And that's what you see, all this strength, this confidence, this charisma, that's all coming forth from someone who's never been dealt with by God.

When you've been put on your face, trust me, your dealings with God, and on behalf of God, are with fear and trembling. As the apostle Paul could tell you, fear and trembling. You're careful about what you say, what you teach.

But these guys don't have to worry about any of that. Now, so outwardly, they're preaching their sermons, they're writing their books, full of confidence. But I want to show you what's really going on inside them, deep down in their hearts.

They wouldn't even think these thoughts necessarily. You know, it's more of an attitude that kind of emerges forth in different ways. But this is what goes on inside them.

Now, I don't really believe in these Christian things so much, you know, but I really need you to like me. And so I'm going to preach just enough truth so you'll like me and many of you will come to my church and many of you will read my books. I really need you to like me.

So I'm just going to keep preaching the way I preach and just kind of present some of the truth because I really need you to like me. And, you know, and I'm going to just keep doing this and I'm becoming more and more famous. Isn't this wonderful? I'm getting paid all this money.

I really need you to like me. Yeah. I should be given an Academy Award for that.

You talk about out of character. That is not me, trust me. I don't need anyone to like me.

She'll tell you. You know, I'm human. I want people to like me, but, you know, I've got to bring the truth.

I have to bring the truth, you know, and I love people. I care about where people are going. Ultimately, that's really all that matters.

Right? A hundred years from now, what's it matter? How much people like you. And I was thinking about this when we're in the quiet time. I was thinking about these guys, what cowards they are.

These inward cowards. You know, when you're a coward, you have nothing inside you. When you get into stressful situations or whatever, you have no inward fortitude to stand when the tendency is to run.

I want to just mention a couple of people here. I could really, I could say this about any of the staff, but I'm just going to touch on a couple because they kind of epitomized to me the opposite of the self-confident, accomplish everything, charismatic personalities. And, you know, you guys, if I don't call your name, please don't be offended or hurt.

Just a couple of them came to my mind as epitomizing what I'm talking about. Jeremy Crable is one of them. Ken Larkin is another.

Chris Mathias, another. And I bring out these guys because there's something about them that is so solid and real. This character that has been refined in the fires of Christianity, that's solid.

If I was in a foxhole, these are the men that I want in there with me. Not some smooth-talking guy that's full of himself. I want someone who has a bit of a history of saying no to themselves.

Because you know what a coward is? They always think about number one. That is the prevailing characteristic of all cowards. They're always mostly concerned about number one.

Brad mentioned the struggles that the staff has at times with living in this narrow path that God has carved out for those of us on staff here. And it is a struggle at times. I would have said it differently than Brad said.

But, you know, hey, we've got a few more years of experience in this. Let me just put it this way. When you are a sincere person and you're on the narrow path, you're going to go through different struggles.

And a lot of it is self-imposed. You know, it's not that God is laying this heavy thing on you. A lot of it we put on ourselves.

But it's kind of just one of those phases you have to go through as you're working your way through this Christian thing. I don't experience what you're describing at all in my life. I had that.

And for a long time I struggled with all these inward conflicts and stuff. And I do believe that that struggle is pleasing to the Lord. Even though part of Him wishes that you could just be free, you know, completely free of the baggage and the struggles and so on, the struggle in and of itself has merit.

The fact that you care enough that you'll battle through those feelings of self-condemnation or whatever, you know, that we kind of heap on ourselves at times. But I want to tell you, as you continue down this path of obedience, you're getting more and more free inside. That's the truth.

I've been at this for a while. And I'm telling you, I am free inside. I don't have those struggles.

And sin doesn't have any hold in my life. I want the will of God more than I want anything. More than I want my next breath, I want the will of God.

I can honestly say that. I want God's will no matter what. But, you know, it takes time, and you have to go through things as you go down this path of obedience.

But you know something? Obedience is better than sacrifice. That is the thing that just thrills the heart of God, is to have someone who is willing to obey Him. There's a lot of voices pleading the cause of unrighteousness in the church today.

And those voices are very loud. And the voices that are pleading for holiness are very small. You can hardly find them anymore.

But if you want to hear the voice of the Lord, it's going to be calling you to separate yourself from the contaminating influences of this world. That's what the voice of the Lord is going to say to you. It's going to be calling you to obey the Lord from your heart.

From your heart. Not just a few outward little evangelical rules we all kind of keep to. No, heart obedience.

It's going to be compelling you to live your life in such a way as to bring honor and glory to the Lord. That's the voice of the Lord. Now, I spent some time this morning.

I got up at 1 o'clock this morning to prepare for this. And I went over some verses about obedience in the New Testament. I don't know how many I went over, maybe 30, 40, 50, something like that, whatever.

There was a lot of verses that just say it. They just come right out. And I was going to read a list, and I decided not to at the end.

I thought, that's too much reading and too much Scripture and stuff. But there's a lot of verses that come right out and say, if you are going to heaven, you are going to be obedient. I didn't say that right, but you know what I mean.

They say that, and they say it often, and they say it in different ways, but it's always the same message. Only obedient people go to heaven. But I finally decided upon one little passage of three verses in the book of 1 John.

Amazingly, Brad read 1 John 1, verse 6, right up to 1 John 2, verse 2. My verses are verses 3 through 5. See, they're right here. It's the Phillips translation. And I'm going to read these, and I want you to just listen to this, because the Phillips translation really grasped the meaning of what John was expressing when he wrote these things.

This is 1 John 2, 3 through 5. It is only when we obey God's laws that we can be quite sure that we really know Him. The man who claims to know God but does not obey His laws is not only a liar but lives in self-delusion. In practice, the more a man learns to obey God's laws, the more truly and fully does he express his love for Him.

Obedience is the test of whether we really live in God or not. Does that sound like truth? Does that sound like the flattery of a false teacher who needs you to like him? No, and this comes from the apostle of love. The apostle of love wrote this.

That man was full of the love of God. He wasn't giving some swamy, pathetic message that God loves you and has a plan for your life. All you got to do is just keep a few outward little rules and just live the way you want.

No, that's not the message in the book of 1 John. It's piercing, but it's a call of love. Praise the Lord.

Let's pray. Lord, I just want to say that I love you this morning. I thank you that you were never soft on my sin.

Your message to me never waffled. It never attempted to pamper my flesh. You have always been straightforward with me, and yet at the same time, you've upheld me with your hand and made me to know that as much as you were disciplining me, trying to drive the evil out of me, that you loved me, that you cared for me, that you were doing this because you had my well-being in mind.

I thank you, Lord, that you are completely and utterly trustworthy. Thank you, Lord. Thank you that you have loved these men like that, that you've always been honest with them, you've always told them the truth about themselves, and yet you've always made them to feel your love.

And Lord, I know that I guess all of us in here have at times abused that love and that grace, forgive us for that, Lord. Please forgive us. How could we treat such love so shamefully? Yet, Lord, you know it's just in our natures to be that way.

I pray, Lord, that this message will stay lodged in the hearts of every single person who has heard it. Lord, that when the liars come out with their flattery and with their half-truths, that we will just, inside, just take a stand and say, no, I will not listen to these lies. I don't care how much they appeal to my lower nature.

I obey, I listen to, I believe the word of God and not what these men are saying. Put that conviction in every heart, I pray. In Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. God bless you all. Have a wonderful day.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/twMCB4qnKFU.mp4>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/steve-gallagher/the-nicolaitan-conspiracy/>

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