

# Living It

(Sermon Notes)

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“Christianity,” are we **living it**? Do we have the attributes of true Children of God? Are we making progress toward being in the very image of God? Could it be that many of us have grown complacent and too self-assured of our standing with God?

That would be typical of this last age of God’s Church, Laodicea, wouldn’t it? Could we be making that same classic mistake of being let-down, lackluster, lukewarm Christians? It is a grave error to stop measuring ourselves against the perfection of Jesus Christ and God the Father. In fact, Jesus said:

Matthew 5:48 Become you therefore **perfect**, even as your Father which is in heaven is **perfect**.

What an incredibly high standard to set for us – it is unattainable to reach – but with God all things are possible. Jesus tells us not to aim any lower than God’s perfection. Only Jesus has ever been perfect, and yet He expects the same of us. We cannot settle for any less standard than perfection itself.

What we need to ask ourselves is how does God see us? As maturing Christians we welcome and desire His involvement in our lives.

Could it be that within God’s Church we are in danger of making the mistake of speaking religious sounding words but in fact exhibiting very little Christian substance? Many people have a duplicitous faith, which causes them to profess one thing and then live another way. They do not understand the kind of faith of which Jesus spoke.

Genuine and sincere faith is without any pretense, doubt, or hypocrisy. Sadly, the religion practiced in many congregations today is only a pretense of true Godly faith. Can it be that we are only fooling ourselves?

Where is the seriousness, the urgency, and the humility of God’s people? Who has the zeal, the honest introspection, and the integrity to be counted worthy? Are submission, yieldedness, and forgiveness, elements of our spiritual repertoire? When was the last time we extended mercy, and made a great sacrifice to bring about reconciliation?

Our faith is not about saving our skin – but the exact opposite. We can know when it’s time to flee... We can know where the place of safety is, and even have our airline tickets to get there, but if we are not practicing **pure religion** – we are going to miss out altogether (James 1:27). Paul put it this way:

1Corinthians 13:2 Though I have all the faith to move mountains, and have not **Godly love**, I am nothing.

Let’s be more specific about the way we practice Godly love. Let’s ask ourselves questions like: Did I visit any who were sick, elderly or imprisoned? When did I last put my reputation and life on the line for another? Who have I served in a meaningful way? Have I forgiven those who opposed me, or did I fight them back? Do I take a stand against false teachers? Have I taken a stand against injustice? When did I set out to actually encourage someone? Have I fully submitted my will to God’s will? Is my relationship with God sincere and truthful?

This sermon is not a popular message because Christianity is a hard and relentless way of life – when we are **living it**.

People would rather hear about prophecy being fulfilled. People would rather be entertained. People would rather grow their congregations to be the biggest church.

But that is not what Jesus taught us to be. Talk is cheap – and God is not fooled by it. (Galatians 6:7): Speaking of our day:

Isaiah 29:13 The Lord said, For as much as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me...”

God is recreating Himself in mankind a little at a time (Genesis 1:27). He is giving of His Godly attributes so that we might be as He is.

Christian **living** is measured by our disposition toward **all** other people. Do we love them as God intends? We are happy for Jesus and the Father to make their abode in us. (John 14:23) But, do we respect **God** in them?

Am I ashamed of the Gospel? Have we grown in our desire for **all men** to be able to enjoy the riches of God’s Kingdom? As we live our Christianity we learn to view ourselves more and more as God sees us. We no longer justify ourselves – but ask to be justified by the blood of Jesus Christ. We must ask ourselves how much we have taken on a spiritual resemblance to Jesus Christ and His Father. Do our lives reflect that we are truly being led by God?

Many a person believes that he or she is doing enough to be considered a good Christian. A right faith is more than mere words and sentiments – but actions and accomplishment in a person’s life.

James 1:22 Be you doers of the Word of God, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

Matthew 5:1 And seeing the multitudes, he [Jesus] went up into a mountain: and when he was set [ready], his disciples came unto him:

Apparently this is Jesus first sermon – He is laying the groundwork for His ministry – pointing to the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 5:2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

Jesus is teaching right attitudes to have: The Beatitudes:

Matthew 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus begins to lay the foundation that He will build upon. In order for this to happen, there’s got to be a change in our attitudes, our hearts, and in our minds.

Matthew 5:4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Matthew 5:5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Matthew 5:6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Matthew 5:7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Matthew 5:9 Blessed are the **peacemakers**: for they shall be called the children of God.

Matthew 5:10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Blessed are the peacemakers... Brethren, how many of us are actually peacemakers? (Matthew 5:9)

Matthew 5:12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

True Christians **living** their faith, are so precious in God's sight.

Matthew 5:13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

True Christians should stand out brightly for the Godly character they exhibit. A meal is tasteless and without flavor without salt. This world has no reason to exist if it were not for the Children of God on the earth.

Matthew 5:14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

Matthew 5:15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

Matthew 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may **see your good works** [that is **living it**], and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Our Christianity must be visible! There's a challenge for us.

And do not expect anything for it right now – except persecutions on earth – and yet – Matthew 5:16 glorify your Father which is in heaven.

The Pharisees were all show and no heart. I'm afraid when the final chapters of Acts are completed – many of today's congregations will find themselves in the same category as the Pharisees.

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all end with "Amen." But the Book of acts is still open with more to be written...

Matthew 5:20 Here is that high standard for us again!

Matthew 5:20 For I say unto you, That unless your righteousness shall **exceed** the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 23:23 Jesus rebuked the Pharisees: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

In Luke's gospel we read of Jesus' same sharp accusation toward the Pharisees.

Luke 11:42 "But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment, and the **love of God**: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

Speaking about tithing the little herbs, Jesus said, This You ought to have done ... it is right to tithe on everything... but you have neglected that which is most important – the weightier matters of the law. The Pharisees knew the Law Perfectly – thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery, etc...

But Jesus raises the bar of righteousness in this Scripture when He introduces the weightier matters of the law. Our daily lives are filled with discernment, decisions and judgments. Rightly dividing the word of Truth – that is what Judgment is. (2Tim 2:15)

Our judgments are a record and an indication of what our judgments in the Kingdom of God will be. Christ reminded His disciples that God is merciful and therefore, we, who wish to be His children, must be also. Because of our past sins, justice would dictate our death penalty, but God's mercy allows us to live.

Exodus 34:6-7 The Lord God is merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, **forgiving** iniquity and transgression and sin.

Brethren, how much are we merciful, gracious and forgiving? Who among us would forgive an offence **seventy times** X seven times?

Matthew 18:22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

**490** times! Who could do that? The apostles said unto the Lord, “Increase **our faith**.” (Luke 17:5)

The faith that Jesus Christ brings to us is one, whereby, we believe so whole-heartedly in His perfect way that we yield our minds, our wills, and our desires to the will of God.

1John 3:16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Who “turns the other cheek” when wronged?

Matthew 5:39 But I say unto you, That ye **resist not evil**: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

Matthew 5:40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy **coat**, let him have thy **cloak** also.

Matthew 5:41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him two miles.

Matthew 5:42 Give to him that asks thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

Matthew 5:43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate your enemy.

We are to pray for and bless those who curse us.

Matthew 5:44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

Matthew 5:45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

Jesus concludes Chapter 5 with:

Matthew 5:48 “Become ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

That is a high goal to achieve! How many in God’s Church are even aiming that high anymore? We count ourselves as Christians, and rightly so, but isn’t it time we got down to the real basics of our Christianity? Christianity has to do with finding a way - - making a way - - to respect all other people.

And to respect them according to all of God’s law. We do not **steal** from them, or take unfair advantage. We do not **lie** to them, or lead them in a wrong direction. We do not **gamble**, or **drink** to excess becoming drunkards. We do not **fight** against them, or try to destroy them. We **apply** the Ten Commandments is all our dealings with everyone. The world will hate us and despise us as weaklings – as they did Jesus – and killed Him.

And yet, we respect all their rights – especially recognizing that they too were created to be Children of God. We always practice Christianity and Godliness with them – especially when they oppose us, or oppose themselves.

2Timothy 2:24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

2Timothy 2:25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

It is so hard to do, that many people have given up trying – if they ever set their sight that high in the first place. Have you ever noticed how most people go through life without changing too much from the time you first knew of them. And then they make one huge error of judgment that nearly brings them to the brink of destruction. How does that happen?

Perhaps a single purchase or financial deal will overextend their ability to ever be solvent again – bringing them to financial ruin.

Perhaps, like Moses there is a history of an uncontrolled temper that culminates in murder – like when Moses killed the Egyptian – or when he struck the rock in anger, that God had only asked him to speak to.

Or like King David – who knew God's law better than anyone – with the exception of God's Prophets, letting his guard down and becoming an adulterer and murderer.

How do people get themselves into terrible situations like that? Those failings have a cause. They do not happen to someone who is close to God in all his ways.

2Peter 1:10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall **never fall**:

Don't we realize that we have been given everything it takes to be spiritually successful Children of God – if we will only utilize those spiritual resources?

Notice the tools of life God has made available to us: Peter has a list of tools – a way of **living our Christianity** in a sequential order:

2Peter 1:3 According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and Godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to **glory** and **virtue**:

“Called us to glory and virtue,” – that is the perfection of God the Father that we saw in Matthew 5:48. God is glorious... God is virtuous... and that is what we have been called to be – glorious – and virtuous. That is being like God and it only comes through Christianity and our **living it**.

We have been given God's promises of the hope of the resurrection – such a great motivating factor in our lives.

2Peter 1:4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

“By these things,” Peter is speaking of how we are to live our day to day lives – this is not a one-time thing.

And we have been given all the spiritual tools to **Live our Christianity** and to draw near to God. Faith + virtue + knowledge, we've seen them all before – but let's think of **living them** continuously in our daily lives – as a way of life.

2Peter 1:5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith – virtue; and to virtue – knowledge;

This **virtue** is **moral** excellence and the courage of spiritual manliness.

2Peter 1:6 And to knowledge – [**self control**] temperance; and to temperance patience [endurance]; and to patience godliness;

Jesus said, “He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. (Matthew 24:13)

“Be ye holy; for I am holy.” (1Peter 1:16)

2Peter 1:7 And to godliness [holiness] brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness [*‘philadelphia’* – brotherly love] charity [*‘agape’* – Godly love.]

2Peter 1:8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“Knowledge of our Lord Jesus,” means that you will understand what **Christianity is**, and what it is not.

2Peter 1:9 But he that lacks these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

2Peter 1:10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall **never fall**:

James 2:8 If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well:

James 2:9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

James 2:10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

There are not many brethren who are holding fast to the Faith of which Jesus spoke. "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering." (Hebrews 10:23)

Brethren, we need to return to the very basics of Christianity - such as solving problems in a Biblical way and laying our lives down for one another.

Jesus Christ warned a number of times that the saints must be careful to **put into practice** the basic truths and doctrines which were once received.

Right now is our only opportunity to return to the faith once delivered to the saints. Christianity is hard – no, without God's Holy Spirit it is impossible.

Matthew 19:23 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 19:24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

Matthew 19:25 When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?

Matthew 19:26 But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is **impossible**; but with God all things are possible.

Thank God, that He is giving us an opportunity to reflect and build spiritual character at this time – through the power of His Holy Spirit.

2Thessalonians 2:15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold [hold – as make them an integral part of our lives] the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

What about us – we claim to know the doctrines of Christ? Most of us would say that we know what Jesus taught. What makes a person a Christian? We know that saying, "I am a Christian," does not make a person a follower of Christ.

It would help us to determine what a **Christian is**. Better yet, what is a spiritually mature Christian – one who truly walks with Jesus Christ? How can we know if we are truly walking in the steps of Jesus?

Romans 8:14 As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

How well do we put into practice the principles that Jesus taught? Looking at those who have been a part of the Church of God for years and years, it looks like there has been a tendency to let down. Let's be careful not to be lulled into a false sense of complacency. Let us not be as those who sleep.

None of us would dare claim that we have nothing more to achieve – would we? God has given us this time that remains until His coming, to become more like Jesus. There is always a risk of falling into the trap of thinking that we have a good bit of time remaining. In the Scriptures, we are warned not to fall into the trap of saying to ourselves, "My Lord delays His coming" - which would cause us to be unprepared at His return.

Matthew 24:48 "But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delays His coming;

Matthew 24:49 And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;

Matthew 24:50 The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looks not for Him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,

Matthew 24:51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Christ's return is imminent. We are in training for our eternal life. God wants not only our prayers and our thoughts, but also **our actions**.

Let's have a check point: Take a moment and reflect – when during this past week did I shift into a spiritual gear and really apply some of those Beatitudes? God has incredibly high standards that reflect His character -- the character of His Kingdom, and He offers a rich blessing for those who follow them.

Christianity does not come naturally – and as we've seen it is extremely difficult: We become disappointed with our brethren - the saints. We sometimes despair over trials and disappointments – in ourselves and others. Certain things even anger us.

That's the time to take a step back and check our compliance with these teachings of Jesus Christ. When we are praying, meditating, learning, knowing, **living it**, and believing Godly things with all our heart... we will draw near to God and change everything about our lives... to conform to the teachings of Jesus.

Revelation 22:14 Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.

Matthew 11:12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.

That means that we must zealously assert ourselves to take hold, to seize God's way to the Kingdom.

We are told to STRIVE to enter in... (Luke 13:24)

We wrestle...(Ephesians 6:12)

... with fear and trembling... (Philippians 2:12)

Brethren, we have got to grasp the Tree of Life with force – with all our might – and be grounded in God's commandments. Paul said it this way to the Colossians – breaking into verse 9.

Colossians 1:9 ...that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

Colossians 1:10 That ye might **walk worthy** of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

Notice the superlatives:

Colossians 1:11 Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

The Beatitudes show us a totally different way of being. They help us to see the characteristics of the Kingdom of God and the types of people that will enter the Kingdom of God. They show us, not only how we should be living to receive God's blessings, but the beatitudes show us how to have the character of God.

What did Jesus teach? Spiritually, brethren, we are not prepared for the return of Christ. Why? Because: We mistakenly seek recognition. We look for miracles. We respect persons. We have all too many substitutes for "Christianity."

A Christian is not one who knows about the place of safety or is busy getting ready for the place of safety. A Christian is not one who only tithes and goes to Church on Saturday - some Jewish and Protestant folks do that. A Christian is one who knows what Jesus taught and lives it to the full.

Jesus tells us how to be Christians and end up in the Kingdom of God. Jesus says, "Feed Me." "Make sure I have a place to sleep." "Provide clothes for Me." "Look out for Me when I'm sick or in jail." ... and many, many more values, principles, and morals.

1John 3:17 But whosoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother have need, and shuts up his **bowels of compassion** from him, how dwells the love of God in him?

It does not. Jesus knows that we cannot feed every homeless person there is – but we must do what we can to eliminate the causes of their despair and misery. They are in that destitute situation because of wrong choices and broken laws. David observed:

Psalm 37:25 I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

Do we understand how utterly and completely different the people of God are from all the other people of the earth? "Christianity," are we **living it**?

This verse bears repeating:

Matthew 5:48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Matthew 25:34 "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

Matthew 25:35 For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

Matthew 25:36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Matthew 25:37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

Matthew 25:38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

Matthew 25:39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

Matthew 25:40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me.

That's **living it**. It sounds **all** too simple. None of us would turn Jesus away if we saw Him in need. In fact, we would stand in long lines just to talk to Him - we'd drive for hours to be with Him.

It is **in** our **lives** and not our words that our faith must be seen.

End: Living It