



## **Obstacles on the Road to Christ: Affectation**

### **Luke 11:37-42**

Well this was the year that my daughter wrapped up her sixth year, her sixth grade, at the elementary school down the street. And, uh, at just about the time she was about to finish her sixth year there on campus, we got a call from the administration. And they said, "Hey, Parents, uh, we hate to tell you this but, uh, your daughter's enrollment records are incomplete." (0:30)

And we're like, enrollment records? Man, she's been there for six years. She's been through six teachers, and six years of classes, and grades, and-and-and assemblies, and field trips. And you're telling me her enrollment file's not even complete? No, well, sorry. She's missing some critical documents, and, you know, we gotta have you provide those before we can promote her. I thought how crazy is that? To go all those years and never check my kid's file to see if she's actually enrolled in your school. I mean, she's gotten report cards and she's done all this stuff, and she's gotten graded and she got, I mean, all this history there. And you're telling me she was never enrolled? How terrible would it be to be told you're not enrolled after six years in school? (1:11)

And I thought, how much worse though would it be for us to be told we're not really enrolled in the family of God after years in church? After countless sermons. After volunteering in ministry. After doing all these things for all these years, to get to the end of it and to find out we were never really in. Aw, Jesus wouldn't do that. Really, I—I mean, there it sits, right there in the Bible. Matthew 7:21: And he says many—not a couple, not a few—many will say to me on that day—let me paraphrase for the sake of my illustration—"Teacher, Teacher, did we not go to all the classes? Didn't we finish all the assignments? I mean, didn't we have the assemblies, and the field trips. And we were there, we did it all." And he'll say, 'Depart from me. You were never enrolled. Sorry.' (2:06)

Few things would be more important than to settle that issue right there. And it's not a manufactured concern. It is the concern and forecast of Christ that you better make sure, 'cause there's a lot of people that'll go through the motions of this and not be genuine, and so you'd better figure this out. And in our series on roadblocks to Christ here through Luke 11, I mean, we run into today one of the most insidious and most common roadblocks and barriers to people being enrolled in the family of God. And we've called it "affectation." Affectation. (2:40)

Now there's a word you probably didn't use much this week, but you should understand what it means. The word affectation comes from the word "affect", and it is that some things in our lives, our words, our behaviors, our actions, can leave an affect of something that's not actually real. It can leave the impression of something that really defies the reality that underlies it. Affectation. You see, as human beings we are by nature people that are attracted in having an interest in affectation because, uh, I mean we want people to have the right impression. We don't want them to think wrongly. And so we figure out whatever the situation requires, and we make sure that we're not mistaken for some wrong kind of, you know, attitude, or wrong kind of qualifications. So we learn what is acceptable, and what is affecting people in the right way, and then we employ those things, and things work out. And when it comes to Christianity it's the same way. (3:33)



Affectation is certainly most people, I mean, they think about. Is this a Christianly thing to do? Is this a thing that Christians should say? Is this a place that Christians should go? And what would it be that God would want of Christians? And so we figure out what those things are, and they certainly give the impression of Christianity when people look at us, but sometimes they can defy the reality of it all. And I'll tell ya Jesus, when we look at the passage that we've run into today in Luke 11:37-42, you can clearly see by the urgency, and even the severity of Jesus' words, he wants us to do the checking now. Right? We don't want to get to the end of our lives, and come graduation find out you were never enrolled. He wants you to figure that out now. Check your files now. See if really we've got in line what God expects of those that will inherit the kingdom, and you... you'd better make sure. (4:29)

And like we've said throughout this series, it's not only about us looking at ourselves. But the whole point of Jesus giving us all these bad responses to Jesus, I mean, is for us to learn when we're bringing people to Christ that we don't fall into the patterns of really putting roadblocks in front of people that they stumble over. We're gonna make sure that we deal with the problem of affectation. And we say, wait a minute. I don't want to convert you just to the forms of Christianity. I really want to convert you to Christ. 'Cause there's a difference. There's a lot of people that are a part of the church, but they're not really a part of Christ. And so I don't just want to feel good that, hey, I finally got the guy going to church. And, look, they're singing Christian songs, and they've stopped those bad non-Christian habits. And, oh, okay, great, we've got a Christian on our hands. Don't be so sure. As Jesus points out here, he says you better make sure, 'cause there's a lot of things that people associate with Christianity that really don't speak to real Christianity any more than my daughter showing up at class means she's enrolled. (5:28)

Take a look at this text if you haven't turned there already. Luke 11:37-42. When Jesus was done with his discussion about light and darkness, and all that we just went through last time we were together, he says—Luke says, While Jesus was speaking a Pharisee asked him to dine with him. Now, when you read the word Pharisee, we got enough Sunday School information to immediately vilify that person in our mind, but it wasn't that way in the first century. I mean, if anyone had it right with God, it was the Pharisees. I mean, they were the super spirituals among them, and most people looked at them and said, "Well, if anyone's got a connection with God it's those Pharisees." So, you can picture someone that most people thought, well, here's a paragon of, of what it means to be godly. (6:10)

And he says, okay, Rabbi. Okay, would-be Messiah, Jesus. I mean, a lot of talk about who you are, a lot of great, wise teaching. Why don't you come and let's have a meal together. And so they, he goes, and he accommodates him. Verse 37: He, that is Jesus, went in and reclined at the table. Now the Pharisees—verse 38—the Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner. Now he's sounding like my mom when I was a kid, right? Well, you didn't wash your hands. That's kind of a weird thing to say. Well, you need to understand if you don't already that this has nothing to do with the Pharisee's concern about hygiene. This is not about you really should wash your hands before you eat. I mean that's kind of gross that you didn't do it. Nothing to do with that. This was the ceremonial practice. You might remember those stone jars that sat outside when Jesus turned the water into wine in John 2? They were there for ritual purification. It was something that was done before a meal by those that made a claim to

godliness to remind other people that they were clean before God. (7:17)

It's a lot like the Islamic practice of *wadoo*, where they go before prayer time and they wash. If you've been in Islamic countries where they- they all pray, they have these places of washing with the basin and the seat, and the water. And they go through all the steps of washing parts of their body, and then they can go in and pray. It was the practice of showing that I'm clean before God. (7:36)

So his concern wasn't hygiene, his concern was this religious ceremony. And anybody making a claim to godliness clearly does that, and Jesus just marches in and reclines at the table, and he's ready to eat. And he's like, what is he doing? The Lord said to him, obviously perceiving or seeing his astonishment, or maybe the Pharisee said something, and it prompted this response from Jesus. Verse 39: Now you Pharisees you cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. Now that's no way to treat your lunch host, right? Wow, that's kind of, kind of harsh. Why's Jesus so harsh? You see, Jesus is so harsh 'cause he doesn't want you to get to the end of the life when the books are open, and there's that book called the Lamb's Book of Life and your name not be found in it. (8:22)

Jesus unloads on this Pharisee. Look at the next words in verse 40. You fools! He castigates the whole lot of them. Why? So that you and I don't become this. So that you and I don't have all the impressions of godliness but in reality there's something inside that defies that affectation. You fools. Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? Now this is an interesting, mysterious statement we'll untangle shortly. Verse 41: But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you. But woe to you Pharisees. Now you've heard that, I know, but do you understand what it means? Woe—how dreadful for you Pharisees. How horrible it will be for you Pharisees. Why? Well, because there's the disparity between the outside and the inside. You tithe mint and rue—that's another- another, uh, spice from the middle east—and every herb. You tithe from that, you give a tenth of that, to God. But you neglect justice and the love of the God. Now these you ought to have done. You ought to have practiced justice and the love of God without neglecting the others. No, you oughta— you oughta tithe, but you gotta give what God expects you to give, but you got to have the internals matching the externals. (9:40)

Verses 37-39. Let's just start as we try to put you in the sandals of the first century looking at the Pharisees as godly people. They have their practices, and here comes Jesus and he's not engaging in those practices. And Jesus says you know it's not about the form of godliness, it's about the reality of godliness. Let's just think for a little bit about the forms of that godliness in our day. If you've heard me preach you've heard me use this phrase. We often look at people in terms of cultural Christianity. There are things that Christians do . There are things that Christians don't do. That's the-the culture of Christianity, and we need to be very careful about that because it can be deceptive. Number one on your outline, let's jot it down that way. We need to beware of cultural Christianity. (10:23)

### ***1. Beware of cultural Christianity***

Why? Because that cultural Christianity can pass for Christianity, and of course Jesus is trying



to give these very stern words to make sure you and I don't mistake the two. Now, note this carefully. It's not that Jesus is upset about this expression of their godliness. Right? Now I know this is an argument from silence, but you need to understand that Jesus doesn't seem to have a problem with some expressions that go beyond the text of the scripture. Now there are some things in our culture of cultural Christianity that are— that are biblical, and that is what scripture says. Like if you're a Christian you should go to church. "Don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together as is the habit of some." You oughtta do that. You ought to go to church. So you meet someone you having seen for a long time, you stoppin' at Starbuck's on the way to church. They say, "What are you doing?" You say, "I'm going to church." And they say, "Oh, okay, you must be a Christian." See, that's what Christians do. They go to church, and that's a biblical thing. (11:16)

But there are other things. Somebody pulls up and sees your, your Compass Bible Church bumper sticker. Now that's not biblical. Your pastor keeps harping about you having one, but I mean it's not a biblical thing. It's an extra-biblical thing. And they say, "Well this guy must be a Christian." You're wearing your, you know, Not of This World clothing line—great. Nothing un—you know—biblical about that. It's just extra-biblical. It's not anti-biblical. It's just beyond. But it's one of the expressions in twenty-first century, and in our case, Orange County culture. It's what Christians do. (11:44)

And there's a set of things you won't do. And they'll ask you to do some things, you'll say, "I don't do those things." Why? 'Cause I'm a Christian. Well, those are expressions often that fall within the category of biblical things that create a Christian culture, and sometimes extra-biblical things that create a Christian culture, and that's really not Christ's concern here. Why? Because it says in verse 39, the problem is you got the outside looking one way, but the inside is radically different. Oh, you got the Not of This World, but it sure looks like your life is all about this world. You see, there's a real distance between what you seem to be on the outside, and what you proclaim on the outside, and all this washing that you're all clean before God. But you're not clean before God. You're dirty before God, because the interior of your life is dirty. (12:26)

And all I'm saying is because we look at each others' external life, and we can't possibly see what's going on in the interior of someone's life, you just gotta be careful that we don't feel good about looking at our own lives and saying, well, I got the stuff in place. I serve at church. I give in the offering. I go to church. I, I express that I'm a Christian to the people around me. And we don't give attention to what's inside. Beware of cultural Christianity, because those trappings can lead us to think we've got things going on on the inside when there is no necessary tie between the two. Did you follow that? I mean, it's easy for someone to, uh, go to Dodgers Stadium and throw a Dodger hat on. I'm sorry. Is that too fresh of a wound for you... talking of the Dodgers this month? Angels. So can we say that? They've been out for a while, right? I mean, it's one thing to go to Anaheim and— and to go to a game, and to buy a, you know, a flag, or a pennant or a big foam finger, and to put a hat on, and really not be an Angels fan. I mean, you're just going, and friends invited you and thought it'd be cool to buy a red hat, and so, there you are. (13:38)

See, with Christianity it's no different. It's easy to invite people to church, and happens that they happen to like it. And the principles are helpful. And their kids are improving in their lives, and they're less rebellious and they're coming to the youth group. And, hey, and they like it, and



they're all a part of it. And they start putting bumper stickers on. They start singing Christian songs. They stop doing things that the world says, you know, do that. They say, no, I'm a Christian, I don't do that. Well, it real—there's really no necessary tie between the two. But the culture can, can fool you. The affectation of Christian culture can leave an impression that's not necessarily the case. (14:03)

As Jesus put it over there in Matthew 15, he says, you know, these people they honor with their lips—you know the rest of this verse?—but there heart is, where? It's far from me. They're drawing near to me with their behaviors on the externals of their lives, but where there heart is, is not even close. (14:26)

I'd like to turn you to an Old Testament passage that may be hard to find. The book of Amos. One of the earliest writing prophets in the Old Testament. I say that in the period of, the classical period of the prophets, where we start with the major prophets, minor prophets. This is a minor prophet, but in time, in chronology it was early on when Israel in the north and Judea—uh, Judah in the south, they're still both coexisting. And they're having trouble with their Assyrian foreign armies, and so here we've got people that are crying out to God in the book of Amos for God to intervene. Sennacherib, the leaders of the Assyrian army, and all the concerns about the coming of some kind of geopolitical threat. They're saying, O God, if you just show up, O God, if you'd be here, it would be great. (15:11)

Turn to chapter 5 and look at this little book of Amos. Amos is sent to the northern tribes of Israel to diagnose some problems with them, and here is what he says beginning in verse number 18. Amos 5:18, there it is again. "Woe to you." What does that mean? How terrible it is for you. How disastrous it is for you. Why? What? Who desire the day of the Lord. Do you got your eyes on that text? Look at it. Amos 5:18: "Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord." And you're thinking this book is full of contradictions. 'Cause isn't that what, I mean, I thought we're supposed to cry out '*Maranatha*'. I thought we thought we're supposed to want God to show up and intervene. He's going, "Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord." Why is that? 'Cause he's saying why would you desire it? Why would you have the day of the Lord. It's darkness, and not light. What are you talking about? Here are people claiming your name, going to their places of worship, bringing their sacrifices, and they're saying, "We got threats on the borders of our country. God, we'd love for you to show up. The day of the Lord. We just wish God would show up here." (16:13)

Yeah, when God shows up you're not going to like it. It's going to be darkness not light. It's as if a man fled from a lion, verse 19. Okay, the Assyrian armies are coming. God, we're gonna run to you. Please help us! And you show up, and you made it away from the lion of the Assyrians, and—a bear met you. Well, that's a bad day. You run into the house. You got danger outside. And you lean your hand against the wall, you think everything's cool now. And—and a snake bites you. A serpent bit him. What? Verse 20. Is not the day of the Lord darkness and not light? And gloom with no brightness in it at all? And I'm thinking, no. It's like my daughter, can't wait for graduation. I can't wait to be on to junior high. I want to, to have the promotion ceremony and it'll be great. Throw my hat into the air, and it'll be fun. My mom and dad will take me out to my favorite restaurant. It'll be a great day— Oh, sorry, you were never enrolled here. No, it's gonna be terrible. (17:08)



See, it's all about what's going in the interior of your life, because they could look at the exterior of their life and they're doing all the stuff they're supposed to do. Look at verse 21. And God says, You know what? I'm not liking what you're doing. Even though it's the biblical stuff, I hate, he says, and I despise your feasts. Well, that must have been some really horrific parties they were go—no, no. These were religious feasts. This is the word for the festivals that God had ordained and instructed them to go to. I take no delight in your, there's the word, solemn, or holy assemblies. Now, we're doing these meetings for you, God. What do you mean you don't like them? No, I hate 'em. Even though you offer me burnt offerings—now, didn't you require those?—and grain offerings—didn't you ask for those?—I will not accept them. And the peace offerings of your fattened animals I will not look upon them. Take away—as long as we're talking here, I just—take away from me the noise of your songs and the melody of your harps. I will not listen. Why? Why? Why are you rejecting your people? Why is it that when you show up it's gonna be a bad day for them? (18:08)

Well here's the answers, verse 24: the gaping lack of symmetry between the externals of their life and the interior of their life. Here's how he puts it, verse 24. Let justice—that's the word, of righteousness—the righteousness, justice, roll down like the waters. Let righteousness flow like an ever flowing stream. You're missing those things. Oh, you're going through the motions of religiosity. You're going through the motions of Judaism. You're going through the motions of godliness. But your heart? I don't see much justice, much righteousness there. That's what you need to unleash in your life. And then you know what? When the Lord shows up it'll be a good day for you. It will be light. It won't be gloom. (18:47)

See, this is the deception. As heavy as a sermon like this may feel to you, it is the deception that Christ so desperately wants you to avoid. He does not want this to be a reality for you. He doesn't want the books to be opened and go, "Oh, nope. Your name's not here. I guess you never got enrolled. I guess you were just a part of the culture of Christianity." (19:08)

And some people are so focused on that, aren't they? If you were to come over to my house and say, uh, hey let's hang out. I say, great, I want to serve you up some coffee. We don't drink it at my house, so I'm not very good at it, and you can have some bad-tasting coffee at my house. Or I say, Well I'll make you some good hot chocolate, or maybe some hot tea. And, let's go over to my cupboard here and let's look at my mugs. Here, choose a mug. Aren't they beautiful? Matter of fact, they're so beautiful I want to put cabinets on my, in my kitchen where they're just glass where you can see 'em all the time. But I just want to warn you, when you pick out your mug, we never wash the inside of the cups. (19:41)

Right? I don't think you'd be interested. No matter how good they looked on the outside. It's why he says you bought a, you guys are so interested in cleaning the outside of the cup and the dish but you're not concerned about the inside. I'm concerned about the inside. And just because the mugs look so good on the outside you're eager to go say, yes, that's a good mug. That's a good Christian. You're eas— quick to look in the mirror and say, I'm a good Christian. I'm doing all the stuff. And unfortunately, in our evangelism sometimes we lean back satisfied that we've got a convert to Christianity when in reality we don't have a convert to Christ. Beware of cultural Christianity. It can woo people into thinking there's a reality in their lives when it's really nothing



more than affectation. (20:28)

Number two. Verse 40 and 41. Jesus says, You fools. Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? In other words, the God that you're so concerned about going through the motions with in the exterior of your life, didn't he make the interior of your life? Now I know your friends don't see the interior of your life. I know your pastor can't see the interior of your life. But I see it, God sees it. Jesus says, I know what's going on there. God made the interior as well as the exterior. Here's what you do. Verse 41: Give alms of those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you. (21:06)

Now think about that. Give alms. Here's the problem in their heart, according to verse 39. They're greedy. Now he says, you want to give—'cause he's about to say in verse 42 that they're giving, you know, even the tenth of their herb garden, but inside they're full of wickedness. Now, on their external you're giving away your spices, you're giving away a portion of your harvest. In our case, in Christianity, you're giving a part of your, your back window of your minivan to, to, to God stuff. You're giving your Sunday mornings to church. You're giving your October 31st to serve at your church's festival. You're doing all these things and sacrificing in the external. You're willing to offer parts of your schedule to God, part of your money to God, part of your effort to God. But have you given him the internal part of you? Have you given as alms the things that are within? (21:58)

No, those things are gross. Those things are in opposition to God. Those things... they're not something God would want. Well we gotta deal with that. Until you're able to give the interior of your life to God, um, everything's not clean for you. As a matter of fact, the unclean interior invalidates the clean, quote-unquote, exterior. It becomes something that really is no good to God at all. Matter of fact, he'll look at the songs that you sings in worship and he'll say it's noise to me. I wish you'd stop. (22:30)

What we're looking for in this text is the interior to be transformed. Biblical word we use for that is "conversion." And since he used the words "you fools," which is so harsh, I want to make sure that we put this in very strong terms. That's why I chose the verb "demand," and we need to demand it in ourselves, and even in those we share the gospel with. Let's put it this way. Number two: We need to demand in- in- interior, or in- inner conversion. There you go. I'm going to spit it out. (22:56)

## ***2. Demand inner conversion.***

We need to demand inner conversion. We need to demand that what we're looking for is not a change in my schedule, not a change in what I do with my money or my effort or my time. I need to really demand the real core issue, which is am I a new person from the inside. I need to demand that. And I don't have a convert that until that happens with my neighbors. Just 'cause he's in church, just 'cause he's stopped all those vices that the world begs him to do and Christianity prohibits him from. Look, we've seen a change in his lifestyle, we've seen a change in his habits. That's not what God's looking for as the primary concern. We need an inner conversion. (23:34)



One of the most familiar New Testament chapters in all of the Bible is John 3. We get the most familiar verse in all the Bible from John 3:16, but you know the context is Jesus talking with another Pharisee named Nicodemus, and he says here's the thing. You need to know, and he says it right up front, you cannot enter the kingdom of God unless you are— born again. You need an interior transformation so that your Christianity is not a conformity to some external standard, but an internal transformation that moves you from the inside to change from the outside. That's the Christianity from the inside out that God is looking for, and it demands that you be born again. The biblical doctrinal word, we call that "regeneration". New birth. You need that from the inside. (24:23)

Now think of the strong words there. You can't enter the kingdom of God unless you're born again. You know what? You can enter the church and not be born again. You can, uh, enter our list of people to serve in the church and not be born again. You can go to a home fellowship and not be born again. You can sign up for Partners, you can even go through Partners and teach in Partners, and not be born again. You could fill out the forms, answer all the right questions, read the right books, get on the platform, and enter the baptismal tank, and not be born again. You can get really ambitious and enter into some kind of doctrinal, theological training online, and not be born again. You can say I'm gonna quit my job, I'm gonna go to the mission field. You can do that, you can enter the mission field, and not be born again. You can say I'm going all out, man, I'm gonna go get a post-graduate degree in a seminary. You can enter seminary, fill out all the forms, and not be born again. You can enter the pulpit and you can teach every Sunday, and not be born again. But you cannot enter the kingdom of God. You've gotta catch that. Unless you are born again from the inside out. (25:30)

There are a lot of people that are good at conforming from the outside in, and they enter all those things. And those are the people Jesus is speaking to when he says, Matthew 7:21: Many will come to me on that day and say, "Teacher, Teacher, did we—we were in honors class. We, I mean, we weren't sixth grade Christians. Man, I was in post-graduate Christian studies." And he'll say, "Depart from me, you were never enrolled." I never knew you. Inner conversion is the only thing we will settle for, or we don't have a convert looking at us in the mirror, or we don't have a convert sitting next to us in church. (26:09)

John 3. Let me read you a couple times where he makes this assertion. He says to Nicodemus, "Truly, truly." He doesn't stutter, do you understand. When he says that kind of thing he's trying to make very clear. Highlight this. This is super important. Don't miss this, Nicodemus. "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus responded and said, "How can a man be born again? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" You know, wink wink? Jesus answers, "Truly, truly, I say to you. Get this now, Nicodemus. Unless you are born of water and the spirit, you cannot enter the kingdom of God." Water and the spirit. (26:52)

Later on he chides Nicodemus for not understanding that reference to Ezekiel 36. He says what's wrong with you? You're a teacher in Israel, you don't know these things? Of course you know about regeneration. Of course you should know about being born again. Of course you should know about interior conversion. You should know that. Because it was the great promise of the Old Testament in Jeremiah 31, in Ezekiel 34, in Ezekiel 36. The promise that you, to be right





with me, have to go through something that's described as being washed clean with this thing that he says symbolically is this picture of being cleaned and washed with water, and then having the spirit invade your life. And sitting between those two great statements in Ezekiel 36, of being washed clean with water and having all your iniquity washed from you, and having the spirit invade you, is this: I'll put a new spirit in you. In other words, small 's', you'll be a new person. Because you'll have your sins forgiven, and you'll have my spirit inside of you. And right in the middle of that, you're gonna be a new person. A new person on the inside. Not a new body, not a new exterior, not a new schedule, not new habits, not new priorities. Those will come, but they'll move from the inside out. Why? Because that new person in step with the spirit, it says will be moved to keep my ordinances and my commandments. Why? Because the interior is changed. (28:17)

The water, by the way, as you should know from this passage and many others in the Bible, we're not talking about getting in a tank and being—being baptized. We're not talking about sprinkled. We're not talking about any kind of ritual in the church. The water speaks to what Isaiah spoke of in Isaiah 1, and that is, though your sins are as scarlet, they'll be washed, they'll be cleansed, they'll be white as snow. Why? Because God and his spirit will forgive you of all your uncleanness, and then you'll have his spirit. And what will that do to you? It'll make you a new spirit. You'll be a new person. (28:48)

Turn to one passage with me in Titus, please. Look at this. You'll see the symmetry of Ezekiel 36 right here. It's right here in the middle of Titus. Saying the same things in words that should jump off the page at us every time we read them, because it's not about external conformity, it's about internal regeneration. It's about an inner conversion. Titus 3, look at verse 4 with me, please. Titus 3:4-6. But when the goodness and lovingkindness of God our Savior appeared—well, we got a problem, but he's kind. He's gonna fix the problem. What's he gonna do? He's gonna save us. He's gonna forgive us of our sins. He's gonna make us right with the Father. Why? Not because of works done in righteousness. Not because we go to church. Not because we give money. Not because we sign up for ministry. Not because we study the scripture. No. But according to his own mercy. And how is it that we're saved? Look at it here. Here comes the next phrase. By the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit whom he's poured out on us richly. (29:50)

Now catch those two things. Washing is the picture of water. The Spirit of God is poured out on us. There's the promise of Ezekiel 36. You will be cleansed with water, and you will be given the spirit. Now stuck between those two are two words super important to us: regeneration and renewal. Just like in Ezekiel 36. You have to be forgiven of your sins; that's symbolized in the picture of scripture of being washed clean. And then you get God himself inside of you. Those two things sitting in the middle means you will not be the same. The essence and core of who you are will be converted. It will be changed. It will be reborn. It'll be regenerate. And the words used here are regeneration and renewal. (30:33)

You see, you've gotta understand this because some of you, I can only imagine with a crowd this large, are cultural Christians. You've never been converted internally, and because of that you don't even know the experience. And I say experience because it is an experience that's far different than going through the motions and conforming to a Christian standard. It's something



that God says is from the inside out. You're moved from the inside out. (30:58)

Now, a lot of people picture Christianity 'cause it kind of feels this way when you're conforming to an external standard, they picture it like this. I can wake up this morning and I can decide to either, you know, feed the good desires in my life or the bad desires in my life. It's a lot like a computer in your house that has multiple users, and so you've set up multiple users. And to where you turn the computer on, it says, who're you gonna be today? Right? You gonna log in as Mike or you gonna log in as Carlynn. And you decide which one you're gonna log in as, and then there you go. You got a whole system of stuff and apps and preferences, and you got one over here, you got one over here, and you can make a decision when you start it up. And that's how they view the Christian life. They say I gotta go to church. I need more church. I need more Bible. I need more stuff so I can feed the good user, and in the morning I can decide to be that good person. 'Cause you know what? This other, this other iteration of myself, well, that's the user number two and I don't want to be that. I gotta avoid that. And so, I just need more... more Bible, more principles, more discipline, and then I can choose to be the right person everyday. (31:58)

See, that's not Christianity at all. Christianity is described in this passage, you're looking at it there, Titus 3, as the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit. Let's separate those two a little bit now. When I'm washed it's like taking that computer and zapping all the software off of it. Done. Operating system, everything. All the apps, pshhh, washed. And then, renewal. Installed new software. I'm a new person. The interior of who I am, there's not multiple users, I'm not schizophrenic, it's not white dog-black dog, it's not good guy-bad guy, it's not the angel on one shoulder and the demon on the other. It is I am a new person in Christ, designed by God to reflect the values of Christ. Created in the image of Christ. And on the interior I'm a new person. So every morning I log in, and it's only one user. It's me. And that user is designed to please God. (32:51)

And you say we'd have a lot more perfect Christians in the world if that's really what Christianity's all about. Well, you know that's not the reality 'cause you know a lot of Christians that aren't all that fantastic in their daily life. They're not perfect. Look in the mirror and you can affirm that. What's the problem, then? Well, you may be picturing a new computer. It's the same old computer. And some of you know that just by taking old system software, and going, "Oh, great! New software!" And you make the big mistake of uploading the greatest, latest software on the eight year old computer. Doesn't work. Or it if does work, it works *really* slowly. It's *really* terribly. What's wrong with this computer? Did you do the update? Yeah, I did. You shouldn't have done that. Why? 'Cause the hardware doesn't work very well with the software. (33:36)

You do understand, without getting too geeky on a Sunday morning, that the hardware's more than hardware. 'Cause it's some people look in the Bible and they say, oh, that's the flesh. The flesh, and the spirit. I become a new man in Christ, and then I'm contending with the flesh. It's more than the flesh being your bones and your muscles and your joints. It's not just your fallen body, or your appetites to be hungry or to sleep or to feed yourself. No, no, it's far more than that. 'Cause every computer hardware is encoded with what's called firmware. Right? You've heard me use this illustration before? The firmware on a computer is the code that is, that cannot



be changed. It's called firmware 'cause you're not gonna get in there and you're not gonna recode it. It's not like a hard drive. It's not like memory. It's not like you can replace it with new software. It's encoded, it's soldered on the motherboard, and that's how the computer functions. You wanna put new software through that hardware? It's gonna have to have a little fight with the code on the firmware, and that's a problem. (34:34)

See, but it's much a— it's a much different perspective than thinking every morning I wake up and I, I gotta decide to if I want to be more Christian today, or less Christian today. Am I gonna be more feeding my old, you know, me, or the feeding the new me. It's not that way. The Bible says you're a new man in Christ. If anyone is in Christ he is a new— creation. Creation. Old things pass away, new things come. Now, that's not without a struggle though. Why? Because I'm trying to pump new desires, new priorities, a new focus of what this text says are things like love and justice and righteousness, and, man, I get in a fight every time I, I send that command through the hardware. And on the screen, man! It's not always what I wanted. Why? Because I'm struggling with the firmware that's attached to the hardware. My fallen humanity struggles with my impulses to please God. But your impulses to please God are there. (35:25)

Now some of you don't recognize that because you're a cultural Christian. You don't know what it is to say I know what I really am, I know what I really want, I know who I really am in Christ. And if you were to stop me even in the midst of the worst day on the computer when things are not coming up the way I want them to, if I said what do you really want, you'll know that your software is driven and designed and coded by God to please him. The problem is with these desires that are embedded in your humanity. That's what's tripping you up. Now it's a battle. But you gotta know who you are in Christ. (35:57)

Let me turn you to one passage on this. Colossians 3. Colossians 3. To understand the struggle of the Christian life is not to think that you received just an, a new capacity as a Christian, but you become someone new, according to the Bible. You've been given a new heart. The old heart's been taken out and replaced. Whole new system software is in place. You're not who you were before. That's real Christianity. Well then, why am I not perfect? 'Cause you're still stuck in this fallen humanity, and you should crave the coming of Christ. Because that day you will have the redemption of the body, as Romans 8 says. (36:39)

Take a look at verse 5 of Colossians 3. The battle I have is dealing with that malicious code in my firmware. Put to death therefore whatever is earthly in you. Sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, covetousness. Those are still around in my life? Yeah, man. The firmware of my humanity is always saying let's go that direction, let's just do that, can't we just do that, why all this righteousness stuff? On account of these you have to remember the wrath of God is coming. I mean that's the whole point of salvation, to free us from that and the penalty of that. In these, too, you once walked when you were living in them. I mean, you had no other software than the software that was compatible with the fallen firmware. But now you must put them all away. You got to fight this. You gotta power through it. Anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk from your mouth. Don't lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices. Didn't you get a new system software? Aren't you a new person in Christ? Then you've put on the new self. And you know what I gotta do everyday with the new self? I've got to be renewed in knowledge after the image of *its* creator. (37:45)



Don't miss that. Every word of the scripture is important. The image of its creator. See, I am created in the image of Christ the moment I became a Christian. I now have a spirit that is in sync with the Holy Spirit that seeks to do the will of God. But I struggle, as verse 5 says, putting to death the code that's embedded in my humanity. That's what I live in. That's not who I am. Now am I responsible when I give in to the firmware? Absolutely. And God will discipline me if I get into those patterns, and that's how it works. But I know who I am in Christ. I'm a converted individual. I've been born again. Jesus says, Nicodemus, do you not get this? You're a teacher in Israel and you don't understand this, that God needs the interior reformed and made new? If you want a cross-reference on that you can put Ephesians 4:23-24. It's probably already in your reference Bible in the margin. It says, And we are to be renewed in the spirit of our minds as we put on the new self created in the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (38:56)

God didn't make just the outside, the stuff people can see, he made the inside. Give to God your interior. Hand that over to God, and then everything on the inside and the outside are going to start to match up. And with that let's get to the expression of Christ when he looks at the Pharisees saying, I know how you Pharisees are. You're so concerned with the outside. Talk about cleaning the outside of the cup? Look at verse 42, it's printed on your worksheet there. Luke 11:42. But woe to you, Pharisees. How horrible it is for you Pharisees. How terrible and disastrous it will be for you Pharisee. Why? Because you tithe, you give a tenth of mint and rue and every herb, but you neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done without neglecting the others. You gotta be doing both. (39:41)

Now to know how concerned they were with external reputations, the affectation of their behavior in the eyes of others, I mean, this is like you in Israel in the Old Testament harvesting your crop and going, okay, here's our big harvest. And before I put everything in silos I need to come and I need to bring a portion to God. In the Old Testament it was a tenth of- of your harvest. Bring those grain offerings to God. But then your wife has a little tiny, uh, herb garden outside of the house. And, you know, you're out there getting herbs and bay leaves and mint leaves, and all the things you get out of that herb garden, and you don't even think about that. You're just plucking here and there, and you're bringing those inside and you're cooking with them. They were so concerned that everyone understood how godly they were by saying, oh, oh, we don't forget that. Matter of fact we bring those bay leaves in, we bring those mint leaves in, we bring the rue in, and we say, oh wait, we gotta take a tenth of that. Tear off a tenth of that, that leaf there. (40:37)

It's like someone in our day saying well I know the harvest is every time I get a paycheck at work, and so I take that paycheck and I give right off the top. I give to God out of that. And then, you know what? I found a dollar bill crumpled up in the corner of the mall parking lot, and when I got that I said, oh, I gotta go to church and I'm gonna give my dime, give my ten cents. Now is it wrong to give out of something that God gives you? You get a dollar in the parking lot, yeah, I guess you should give from that. But, I mean, it's pretty miniscule. It's pretty- it's easily overlooked. But they said no, we want to make sure we do that. And they would blow trumpets, Matthew 6 said. Ttu-do-doo! Found a dollar in the parking lot! Here's my dime to the Lord. Praise the Lord! Giving my dime! (41:19)

Now what's the problem with these people who did that? Look up at verse 39 one more time. You Pharisees clean the outside of the cup, but on the inside you're full of greed. Now, we're using as an example here their giving. On the inside it's full of greed. Now if I'm full of greed on the inside, when I find a dollar I want the whole dollar. I want the whole dollar. I don't want to give. But I'm gonna give 'cause I want people to see how godly I am, and I want people to know, and even when I look in the mirror—even, I even tithe from the stuff I find in the parking lot. I, I tithe from the mint, you know, and the rue. Well, the problem is inside you are not who you are on the outside. And what God wants, in this passage is, he wants you to have justice, righteousness, that's the- the Greek word, the love of God inside of you, and then, guess what? Go back to verse 41. When I give alms of the things that are within I'm giving to God my love of God, I'm giving to God my passion for righteousness, my- my quest for justice. Then guess what? They all match. That's what God wants. (42:24)

Number three, let's put it that way. We need to aim for godly intentions and godly actions.

### ***3. Aim for godly intentions and actions.***

And don't fall into the pattern of saying all that matters is godly intentions. No, that's why Jesus adds this last phrase in verse 42. These things you ought to have done. You ought to have been filled with righteousness, and-and-and justice, and love, and you should not have neglected giving off the stuff that God gave you. I mean that is important. We're not talking about washings here that are extra-biblical, we're talking about biblical instructions and you ought to do those. And some people thing well, I don't have to go to church 'cause in my heart I love the Lord. No, you have to go to church. The Bible says don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together. But what God wants is you to go to church because you love him. Not 'cause you're putting in your time like those people were that we read in Amos 5. They're just going through the motions, they're singing the songs. God says that's noise to me 'cause it's not coming from within you, it's all about you checking an external box, a template. (43:14)

Got to aim for godly intentions and actions. And as long as we're talking about motives, let me just say a word about that. Some people think that a good motive will salvage a bad action, and that's not true in the Bible at all. Don't tell me that you do something unbiblical, and just 'cause you have a good motive that God says, oh that's fine. No, it's not. Clearly a good motive will not salvage a bad action. But here's the thing being made crystal clear in this text. And that is a good action like tithing can certainly be invalidated by a bad motive when the interior doesn't match. You got a bad motive and a bad action, what are we even talking about? No one should be advocating that. So out of the four possible options, all that God really is gonna accept is when my heart is in sync with righteous actions, when my intentions and motives of my heart are in sync with the things that I'm doing that are biblical. God wants us to do biblical things, but it has to be motivated, as Ezekiel 36 says, out of the interior of my life 'cause the Spirit of God has changed who I am. I've been forgiven. I got the Spirit of God in me that makes me a new person in Christ. He's given me a new desire, a new man, created in the image of God in true holiness and righteousness. Now that's what I want to do, and I don't want to neglect the instructions of God. The interior matches the exterior. (44:32)





That's not cultural Christianity. Cultural Christianity's just concerned with checking the boxes on what people expect of Christians. We've got so many passages in our daily Bible reading. Are you keeping up with our daily Bible reading? In Isaiah, what a great book. I know that some of you studied it in the adult—uh, Sunday school class recently, but we've hit so many passages recently, just this last week, that deal with this very principle that we're talking about. Every time I was reading this week in my daily Bible reading, I'm thinking wow, these are exactly the things we're gonna be preaching on this weekend. And we read the Isaiah 53 passage in the service for our worship but when we got to Isaiah 58 he starts talking about the disparity between their actions and their heart. (45:10)

Do you remember that passage when they started talking about God, why don't you listen to us when we fast and pray? And God said, oh, would you take another look at your fasting there? What's going on in your heart? Did you really fast for me, or did you do this really for yourselves? What does that mean? 'Cause it gives the impression, the affectation, that I'm someone that I'm really not. You did it to bolster who you were. You did it, as it says in Matthew 6, to be respected by people, to be praised and lauded by people. You didn't fast for me. No, had you fasted for me it would have been different 'cause there would have been righteousness. There would've been love. There would've been things coming out of your heart, in that case in fasting, contrition. You would've covered yourself in sackcloth. You would've been humbled before me. You weren't, you weren't any of that. But you went to church. You even did the hard thing and sacrificed not eating—eating a few meals, but you didn't do what I'm asking you to do 'cause you weren't in sync in your heart and in your actions. (46:04)

How about the one we read this morning, or you'll read tonight? We'll read the last two chapter of Isaiah today in our daily Bible reading. And he says, you know what? It's so bad in Israel that people are sitting there offering sacrifices that are required by the scripture, and it's to me like you killing a person in worship. It's abhorrent to me. Why? 'Cause your hearts not there. Because you don't love me. 'Cause you're not converted on the interior of your lives. Aim for godly intentions and actions. (46:34)

God is not opposed to you keeping the biblical mandates. You don't have to wash before a meal, you don't have put a bumper sticker on your car, you don't need to wear Christian clothing. I get all that. But when it comes to the scripture you've gotta do those things, but what God's looking for is a heart and a behavior that are in sync. See, the Christian life is not God asking you to grit your teeth and just do the stuff he's asked Christians to do. It's about you making sure your heart is really changed, so that those things become, as the Bible says, not a burden to you but a joy to you. Is it hard? It is hard. Why? 'Cause the fallen flesh. There's a difficulty, a handicap, in our flesh. But who we really are? Oh, we're people that want to live for Christ. There's no fiction going on here. There's the reality of a converted heart that wants to live, and even power through the difficulties to live the Christian life all the way to the end. (47:30)

Reminds me of John Stephen Akhwari. Akhwari, if you're really into running you might remember, became a notable entry in the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. He was known not because he won. He was competing against some world class marathoners. And that long marathon, you know how that is in the Olympics, and they run and run and run and run, and then they finally run into the arena around the track there the last time, and everybody's cheering, and



it, it, I mean, it's a big deal, the marathon race. Akhwari is from Tanzania. And he became a notable entry in that year's Olympics not because he won. As a matter of fact, he came in last place. Dead last, by a long shot. But he was notable not because he won, but because of how he ran the race. (48:21)

See, about halfway through the race Akhwari tripped and stumbled. He fell, and he hurt his leg. I've even read some reports that he actually dislocated his knee. Wow. Now, I've done that. I've dislocated my right knee, and it was a horrific pain. And the thing about Akhwari was after laying on the ground for a while, writhing in pain, he got up. He took a piece of cloth and he wrapped his knee with that cloth. And he started hobbling along to finish this race. The winners and the pack had come in an hour earlier into the stadium, and there was a lot of people gone. Matter of fact, there wasn't many people left in the stadium. And John Stephen Akhwari came through that tunnel into the stadium, hobbling and limping, to make that final lap around the track. And if you look up pictures of this you'll see the, I mean just dotted people, just a few people in the stands, but when they saw him hobbling in? They were on their feet. They started cheering as he limped, and limped, and limped, and limped, and finally crossed the finish line. When they asked Akhwari what are you doing? In the interview after he came across the finish in dead last, an hour after the rest of the pack: why didn't you just quit? (49:39)

And his response was this. My country did not send me thousands of miles to start the race. My country sent me thousands of miles to finish the race. Right? You want to talk about a runner? I mean, if you were a long distance runner you have heard of Akhwari from Tanzania, because that is a runner from the inside out. Is it hard? Yeah, it's hard. The Christian life is hard. It is a battle. Paul said this at the end of his race. I fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Now why is that? 'Cause he really gritted his teeth and did all those things he didn't really want to do? No. Because he was born again from the inside out, and he pushed, and pushed, and pushed, and at times had to limp along. There were times in his Christian life, according to 2 Corinthians 1, he wanted to die. But he pushed on. Because that's who he was in Christ, and he renewed that inner man, as it says in Romans 12. He was renewed in his mind, and he kept, kept being renewed in the knowledge of the one who created him in true righteousness and holiness, and he powered through this. (50:56)

See, as Hebrews 3 says, the ones that have come to share in Christ are those who hold his confidence firm until the end. Do you know how you know if you're converted? You will see this thing from the interior of your life feeding the exterior, moving through the obstacles, working through the pain, pushing through your sanctification, all the way to the end. That's what God has asked you to do. (51:15)

Beware of cultural Christianity. It's just not about being here on Sundays, it's not about just serving. It's about interior regeneration. Conversion. It's about us everyday, going, you know, it's not easy but I'm gonna try to make the heart match the practice. To make the interior sync up with the exterior. That's the call of God for all of us. (51:37)

Let's pray. God, help us never to hear those words, "Depart from me, I never knew you." God, I know it's a heavy thing to even contemplate. And I know some people take offense immediately at that. Why are you making me question my salvation? God, how gracious you are to call out



this Pharisee with such strong words, calling him and others like him fools, and saying 'Woe to you.' How good that is for us. What a loving thing that is for us, to make us look in the mirror of our lives and say are we just going through the motions? God, I pray that we would all, as the scripture chides us to do, to test ourselves to see if we're really of the faith. How? Looking in our lives and seeing if we're conforming from the outside in to be more Christianly this week, or whether or not we're born again, having that interior transformation that begins with repentance and faith and a full confidence in Christ that changes who we are. Our sins are washed, and the Spirit comes to reside within us and we're made new. O God, I wish I could say it's easy to run the Christian life. It's not. It's a fight. I wish I could say everyday I'm doing what my core desire's want. I'm certainly not. I struggle and I cry out "*Maranatha*," knowing it'll be a day of light and not of gloom for me. Why? Because I recognize that the problem with me is not who I am as a born again Christian. It's this fallen humanity that I live in, and one day I can't wait to see Christ because it will be for me the final stage of my conversion, the redemption of my body. So God, bring that on, please. And we do cry out "*Maranatha*," those of us that are saved. And for those that aren't, let them check their enrollment files right now. Let them do the work of looking in their own lives and saying have I been born again? And God, we don't need a, an altar call, people walking aisles raising hands. We don't need forms to fill out. We just need you to do work in people's hearts, and have them concede and surrender, and give their hearts to you right now. Let them give as alms the interior of their lives to you, even now. And God, for the rest of us let us think about our evangelism and not just trying to get people inculturated into Christianity. Help us convert people not to a movement or a culture, but convert them to Christ. Help us be faithful in this. In Jesus name. Amen.