

What Is True Spirituality

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 17 October 1982

Preacher: Dave Warren

[0:00] Eternal light, abundant light, has been offered to you.

Eternal life, abundant life, accept them, God's promise is true.

Eternal life is given to you when you ask the Lord in your heart.

It's given to all who believe on His name. Accept Him, your new life will start.

Eternal life is given to all. You don't have to win it or buy it.

[1:38] But abundant life is different, my friend. Now listen and we will describe it.

The daily work of Christ in our lives as we yield to the Spirit's control.

He'll help us to grow, will help us to live, develop our lives as a whole.

It takes faith to trust Him, to lead you on, faith to yield to His plan.

But abundant life needs time and work.

[2:55] He'll guide you, just give Him in your hand. The abundant life has blessings, my friend.

And resources in Jesus are yours. The victory in battle is waiting for you.

It is counted for blessings and more. The eternal life, abundant life, except Him, God's promise is true.

Except Him, God's promise is true.

Except Him, God's promise is true.

[4:23] Except Him, God's promise is true.

Except Him, God's promise is true.

Amen. When I think of Jesus dying on the cross for me, Thine Lord would I be, Freely giving up his life from sin to set me free, Thine Lord would I be, Thine Lord only Thine, Thine Lord only Thine, Take me, use me as Thou wilt,

Dear Savior, Thine Lord only Thine, When I think of Jesus rising victor o'er the tomb, Thine Lord would I be, As the Lord triumphantly dispersing death's dark gloom, Thine Lord would I be, When I think of Jesus coming back to earth again, Thine Lord would I be, Coming in great glory as the King of kings to reign, Thine Lord would I be,

Thine Lord only Thine, Thine Lord only Thine, Take me, use me as Thou wilt, Dear Savior, Thine Lord only Thine, Have Thine, have Thine own way, Have Thine own way, Lord, Have Thine own way, Hold o'er my being, Absolute sway, Fill with Thy Spirit, Till all shall see, Christ only always,

[8:13] Living in me, Thine Lord only Thine, Thine Lord only Thine, Thine Lord only Thine, Thine, Thine.

Thine Lord only Thine, Thine Lord only Thine, Thine Lord only Thine, Thine Lord only Thine, Thine Lord only Thine, Thine Lord only Thine, Thine Lord only Thine, Thine Lord only Thine your shir, Thine Lord of Thine Lord and Thine Lord, It's not polite to watch people dress.

You have read the bulletin, and you have heard the singing and the choir and the special music.

Therefore, you know the topic of our message today is, What is True Spirituality? As I was driving over this morning from Cedarville, I was kind of worried in my heart, thinking now, are they really going to be interested in that topic?

Maybe as we get going, there may be someone who's asking the question, who cares what is true spirituality? But of course, I should assume the best of you.

[9:44] There is one family, however, that I know needs a healthy dose of true spirituality. Because they left me a note on the pulpit.

Their little note went something like this, We thought you would enjoy this since you have been making a few Ohio State comments. And so they sent me a little placard here.

They need this message desperately. It runs something like this. I'll put this somewhere. I'm not sure where I'm going to put this.

I will keep it. The best part of Michigan is underwater. Whoever said that needs this message desperately.

I'll tell you that. All right. And whoever agrees with that also needs it. All right.

[10:41] All right. All right. What is true spirituality? We sung about it this morning, living for Jesus. We heard the choir sing a beautiful number on the abundant life and the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ came to give us not only life eternal, but life abundant.

We have turned and pledged allegiance to the Christian flag and to the Savior for whose kingdom it stands. But what is this thing of true spirituality anyway?

After I did arrive in the building this morning, I took a quick glance through the hymnal that you have. In a section in the back entitled, Deeper Life, I counted some 61 songs listed that deal with this matter of the spiritual life.

Seems to me that if we pledge ourselves to it, and if we sing about it so much, and if we throw the jargon around of the Christian life, it seems to me only logical that we have a very clear-headed conception of what true spirituality is all about.

When I wrote a letter to Larry Price a number of weeks ago and gave to him the titles for the sermons on Sunday morning and evening, I had no idea on that occasion that you were having a class that dealt with this whole matter.

[12:23] I'm not sure the exact title of the class, Pharisee's Guide to Holiness or something like that. I had no idea you were having a class like that. But perhaps this message will kind of come in alongside of that class and yield some strength there and some ammunition to go along with the particular thoughts of that class as well.

So from a number of different aspects and for a number of different reasons, there ought to be some built-in interest, especially in the Hess family, with regards to what is true spirituality.

Now, one of the problems that we have in Christianity, frankly, are these crazy cliches that we get a hold of and bring nothing but confusion to us.

You will hear one man talk about the deeper life. And you'll have another man talking about the higher life. And all of a sudden you think you're on some kind of a spiritual roller coaster.

I'm on the higher life and I'm in the deeper life, etc. You will hear others talk about the crucified life. Others using the little cliche, I die daily, etc.

[13:47] Trying to capsulize, I guess I might say, put in a little pill somehow and simplify, and perhaps oversimplify this whole matter of the spiritual life.

You will have other folks who will equate true spirituality with some type of a grand emotional experience, an ecstatic experience.

Sometimes it's speaking in tongues. Sometimes it is having a vision or some other such extra human experience. And they think, well, you're only really spiritual if you have that same ecstatic experience.

Sometimes we Baptists have a tendency to be very silent at that point because we don't say a lot about emotions, although we probably should. One thing that always comes to my mind in that connection is simply this.

The Lord Jesus Christ himself never spoke in tongues, and he was the most spiritual of us all. So that obviously has nothing to do with being truly spiritual.

[15:02] Sometimes folks give the impression that true spirituality is simply any kind of an ishy-guishy, ooey-gooley feeling. It just kind of overpowers you in church and you just feel so good.

You must be spiritual. Nothing wrong with ishy-guishiness. There are times to be ooey-gooley.

That's fine. Everybody needs that on occasion.

But that kind of a base for true spirituality has too much fluctuation in it. It's too much up and down. There's got to be something more stable, something that we can sink our teeth into, something we can stand firmly upon, say, now that is true spirituality.

If you weren't confused before you came in, you may be by now. But that's fine, because I have discovered that confusion is the first step in true learning.

Get thoroughly confused, and then we start putting things together. I am going to try, in one word, to summarize what is true spirituality.

[16:13] Before I do that, however, we need to have a little bit of background. Will you come with me to Romans 8, 29? Romans chapter 8, and verse 29.

So many times we quote Romans 8, 28, and never quite give the same degree of concentration to the next verse.

But notice it for just a moment with me. Paul says this, speaking of the believer, For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.

Which being interpreted simply means that way back in eternity past, when God was formulating and putting together his plan of salvation, that God planned, God predetermined, he laid it down in his mind, that every one of his children would be ultimately conformed to the image of his Son, Jesus Christ.

That his children would be like Christ. that was his intention, that was his plan from a long time ago.

[17:48] And then if you will link that verse with 1 John chapter 3 and verse 2, and some of you already are beginning to get the drift of where we're going, and that's fine.

I hope you're alive and well enough to do that at this point. 1 John 3, 2, we turn from the past to the future, a prediction made here.

You'll notice it in verse 2, Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. God has not only planned that every one of his children will be like Christ, but here it is predicted that when he returns in the rapture and we are snatched into his presence, that instantly we are going to be like him.

There's going to be a tremendous transformation, a change right there, physically, emotionally, socially, in every way. We're going to be like him. We shall see him as he is and be just like him.

[19:11] So when you look to the past, we say, well, God planned that we will be like Christ, and in the future, God has predicted we're going to be like Christ.

Therefore, the essential ingredient in true spirituality is Christ-likeness.

It is being like him. Now, what God planned in the past and what he predicted in the future must become and can become a present reality in my heart and in yours.

You and I who know Christ as Savior can right now be living like Christ.

We can be on the way of becoming like him so that we think like he thinks. We have the mind of Christ.

[20:27] We act like he would act in particular circumstances. We project attitudes that he himself would project. We are like Christ right now.

That's true spirituality. There is a present reality to this whole matter. And so I take you to our text of the morning.

2 Corinthians 3 and verse 18. 2 Corinthians 3 and verse 18.

I like to call this verse home plate because I believe that this one verse takes the various ingredients in true spirituality and it pulls them all together and focuses our attention on all of them at one time.

This is home plate on true spirituality. Notice the verse with me. Paul says, But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

[21:57] Notice those words right in the middle of the verse. we are changed into the same image.

We are being changed. There is a present ongoing process in our lives Paul says.

Something is going on. We are being changed into what? into the same image that is into the likeness of Christ.

We'll see that in a moment. Now by the grace of God and in the power of the Holy Spirit this morning I would like to take that verse apart limb from limb and just dangle its constituent parts in front of you and then put the whole thing back together.

as I read this verse and I'll relate it to the context in a moment I'm not going to wrench it out of its context just hang on a second. As I read this verse however I notice that one of the leading thoughts here is simply this that this matter of true spirituality is a real possibility for every believer.

[23:16] every believer can be truly spiritual. Notice what Paul says but we all with open face.

We all. Now Paul didn't say we all just to fill space there nor did he say it because he was from West Virginia or Tennessee or Georgia or Southern Greece.

We all means all all believers. We all can behold the glory of God as in a glass.

We all are being changed from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord. Every believer can be truly like Christ.

Every one of you. There is the tendency on our part to think well that true spirituality business that's something for the preacher or that is something for the deacons or maybe the Sunday school teachers or the Christian school teachers maybe they ought to really you know get on that stuff but I am just a bread and butter standard banana believer.

[24:47] Just a guy in a pew that's all. I just am a laboring person or I work in an office and you know that's for the biggies and I'm just a little a and I really don't come in under that requirement or advantage.

but that's not what Paul says. We all. Everyone who has an open face say what in the world does that mean?

This is where we have to remember the context of this verse. Paul in chapter three is contrasting the Old Testament legal system under Moses with the New Testament system of grace under the Lord Jesus Christ.

And he singles out of that Old Testament experience one event and you are familiar with it I presume in which Moses goes up to the mountain and there he speaks with God face to face and God gives to him the law and he comes back down out of that mountain and his face is all aglow. He has been in the presence of God Almighty he has been in that Shekinah glory cloud and something of that glow has been reflected in his face and as he comes back into the camp with this glowing countenance a radiance beaming off of his face he is forced as you know to put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel would not be particularly disturbed or surprised by that glow and also so that they would not see it gradually lessening and getting less and less noticeable day by day he covered that thing now Paul picks that symbolism or he picks that event up and really turns it into a symbolism you'll notice verse 13 what he does here he says not as Moses who put a veil over his face that the children of

[27:04] Israel should not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished but their minds were blinded for until this day remains the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament which veil is done away in Christ but even unto this day when Moses is read the veil is upon heart nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord the veil shall be taken away let me explain that to you in describing the unsaved Jew here and we may broaden that to all unsaved people the unsaved mind the unsaved person has a veil over his understanding he cannot understand he cannot perceive he cannot understand there is a darkness there there is a shadow of unbelief and it is as though the gospel and the truth of

God comes to him and bounces off but he says when that person turns to the Lord verse 16 when that heart that unbelieving person turns to God the veil is lifted the face in the heart is unveiled it's wide open now to receive truth and light and understanding in describing the saved person Paul described us as people who have the eyes of our heart enlightened the veil is gone you see normally when we think of saved and unsaved people we think only in terms of sin that the unsaved person has guilt and he's really sinful etc and that the saved person has been forgiven of sin well that's true but that's not the only way the saved and unsaved are described the unsaved is a person who has a veil over his spiritual perception but when he turns to the

Lord the veil is removed now look at verse 18 in the light of that but we all with open face we don't have that veil of sin the veil of unbelief we don't have the in now I can't say it we do not have the inability that's what I was trying to say we don't have that inability to understand the veil is gone I'm just the preacher I'm just the teacher I'm just the deacon I'm just the biggie!

with open face well there is a possibility there something for every believer this verse however also details and you've already noticed it a process notice the process an ongoing continuing process spelled out for us what's going on here we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory now I want you to notice something this is an ongoing process this is not a once for a lifetime a once for all a one shot act we're looking at present tenses we are beholding something we are being changed the text reads and this change goes from glory to glory to glory we are looking at a lifelong process some of you say oh Mr. Warren I've got such a long way to go but you've got your whole life there's no reason to stand at the beginning or the front end of the process and say I'm never going to start because this thing is supposed to keep on going through all of life!

[32:37] ! to that's what the word behold means to gaze or to take a prolonged look just like some of you guys do when you see that new car that latest mile going down the street and your eye you just follow that thing and you try to pick up every little detail of that those taillights and the lines and the mag wheels and all that stuff and pick up all of that detail because you are concentrating your gaze on that car we are to gaze at something well what is it beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord the glass here is simply a mirror and that mirror is the scripture you can check that out in

James chapter one we'll not take a moment to do that but James there likens the believer to one who comes to the mirror and he looks in the mirror and he sees something there Paul uses the same imagery my job as a Christian is to come to the scripture and to look at it and to read it and to understand it and to see in this book the glory of the Lord there's more in this book than just words on a page it's more than just black and white it's more than just interesting story it's more than just orthodox doctrine although it's all of that there is the glory of God in his word I like what the psalmist said I think it's a wonderful prayer when you come to reading the Bible he said open thou mine eyes that veil away why that

I may behold same term wondrous things out of thy law now that's something I've got to do sometimes we have this notion that in order to be truly spiritual there's nothing I do I am totally passive instrument here and God kind of shoves and pushes and cajoles and begs and pleads and does a few other things to me and I just kind of passive pawn being moved all around no no it's very active I must be whole that's something I must do that means you mean Mr.

Warren I gotta get out my Bible get the dust off the thing read it yeah that's right and I'm looking for the glory of God and I remind you of the context in the Old Testament era only one man saw God's glory only Moses was allowed up there the rest were shut out they didn't want to be up there but in the New Testament era every one of us as it were can go up to that mountain and we can have a private personal interview with God in his glory in his word beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord God you know I think it would help us in our whole attitude toward personal devotions if we would tell ourselves hey you know this is not just an intellectual process this is not something I got to do to fulfill some requirement I'm not trying just to appease God up there and if I don't read my Bible today he's going to reach down and clunk me no no those are that's my part in this process that's half the process look at the last half quickly with me I know you're out there I can hear you breathing so if you will just do that he says it is as we are beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord that we are changed we are being changed literally into the same image from glory to glory now this is passive I can't do this part I can do the beholding I can look in the book but it's as I am looking in the book that something happens to me on the inside we all are being changed into the same image in other words

[37:42] I'm seeing the glory of the Lord I see the Savior in his word and it is as I look in the book and I see him that I am gradually being changed to be just like him now remember God determined we would be like Christ God has predicted at the rapture we will be like Christ and in the middle here there is to be an ongoing process where I become more and more and more like him as I look in the book and I see his glory he does a work in my heart and I am gradually changed into his likeness now those of you who are in the sciences scientific community will recognize this Greek word here it is the word metamorphosis and it's a wonderful concept really you go down the sidewalk and you see a little caterpillar going down there and you look at that little brown and black fuzzy looking thing and you go

Caterpillar no you wouldn't do that but you look at the thing you say ooh I don't like the looks of that if you follow it down the sidewalk till it finally gets home if they have homes and you find the thing he starts to wrap himself up in what they call a cocoon till he's all safe and snug and dry and he goes to sleep in there!

you! stand there and say why he's in a cocoon and you come back sometime later and the thing is starting to wiggle you know and you say oh that caterpillar he's going to come out of his cocoon now and you know what happens that thing wiggles and finally the cocoon busts open cracks and out comes not that worm but a butterfly a beautiful butterfly you say man what happened to you here you were earth bound ugly apparently useless and through this cocoon process which we call metamorphosis you were changed and you became a beautiful heaven bound butterfly similarly my beloved friends when we are first saved we enter that cocoon as a worm apparently useless earth bound but through this process of internal change as

I read the word and as we'll see in a moment in the power of the Holy Spirit there is an internal deep change and we come out on the other end of the process not earth bound!

heavenly minded not useless but useful not ugly and scary but beautiful we have been metamorphosized we have been changed and please notice it is from the inside out let's get the direction straight it is not by a process of rigidity a rule ishness where we think if we are heavily disciplined if we are strict enough we will be spiritual oh no that's backwards it is on the inside to the outside a wonderful change and please notice these words from glory to glory what does that mean at least it has to mean gradually bit by bit it's not overnight not all at once bit by bit and

[41 : 56] I think it has to also mean you get a little better a little better you make progress make progress because again the context is telling us that Moses glory was a fading thing that was one of the reasons he veiled it he didn't want them to see this thing fade but our glory of this age is not a fading glory it is a growing glory and therefore we are to be making progress all of our lives by virtue of this process now I'd like to try to illustrate that while pastoring up in Warren Ohio the McDonald's corporation decided to build one of their restaurants in our town and I thought the Baptist Steakhouse is coming to town that's the place I like it and so you know they had the sign on the lot and all of that good stuff and then the dozers came in and the various construction crews and it took them about and I'm not going to exaggerate and I'm not going to speak evangelistically but two to three weeks two to three weeks that shell was up the roof was on those arches were there you know and I'm driving by to do my hospital calls another month or last will have the titles here let's go

I was excited you can tell my class level it's somewhere don't worry about me well when you have four children you know you've got to be practical anyway before I was so rudely interrupted I thought oh man that's not going to take them long at all and then I waited and I waited and a month turned into two months maybe three months you know and they're working like crazy I didn't think they were doing anything and I have to thinking about that that's the way we are when we're saved you know when folks first get saved there is an initial burst of growth and a very obvious growth that shell of our spiritual life comes up and those old habits seem to drop away very quickly not necessarily easily but quickly I remember folks who were first saved and the next week or two I was in their home visiting them as the pastor and there would be a package of cigarettes there and the smell of smoke around the house and you know they'd start saying oh pastor Warren please excuse us for this you know and I thought to myself you know I hadn't said boo from the pulpit about it but the spirit of God had begun to go to work on them so many times when people are first saved various habits change and drop away and even their appearance sometimes the actual physical appearance is different but after a year or two you may not see that kind of change you may not see it I didn't say it wasn't there you may not see it because you see once you get that outer shell up the inside finishing work takes a long time beloved friends I'm suggesting to you that this matter of true spirituality is a process that will take you from glory to glory bit by bit that it is an internal matter and it's going to go all your life that's the idea you can have it we all it involves a process

I must look in the book and God as I look in the book effects a miraculous change so that I become gradually more and more like Christ that's not hard to understand is it is it not a common understanding that when two people are married and they live in each other's presence and they love together and they fight together and they struggle through problems together and buy and pay for a house together etc and all of those together things is it not true that after 30 40 50 years they start thinking alike and in many cases they actually start looking alike isn't that true so beloved friends if we as Christians will stay in the presence of our

Lord and stay in the book we will begin to think like he thinks and to actually look like him not physically but in every other aspect of our lives I like that I can understand that I can get my hands on that and say I'm going to be like Christ that is true spirituality to be like him you say now someone may be saying hey that's way out there and it sounds mighty bookish I mean really talk about looking in the book and here you are a college teacher talking about reading the Bible sounds like a purely intellectual thing I'm glad you thought that because it isn't if you look at the last part of the verse we really weren't quite done this whole thing you see depends on the person of the [47 : 53] Holy Spirit it says that this whole thing takes place even as by the Spirit of the Lord the Holy Spirit he is the one who works within me to want to read the book he is the one as I read the book who opens my eyes to see the glory of God he is the best teacher of this book better than any human teacher you will ever have he is the finest teacher of this book because he wrote it and he also is your finest teacher because he saved and he knows you he's the one who opens our eyes

he is the one that affects this internal change I can't do that for myself you can't do that for yourself true spirituality is not like that little train going up the hill I think

I can I think I can I think I can I think I can he gets up to the peak and he starts down I thought I could I thought I could I thought I could that's not spirituality that's pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps but it's the spirit of God Christ in me I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me the blessed person of the Holy Spirit I say this to you very candidly some of us don't know diddly about the Holy Spirit I'm talking to Christians we ignore his presence while out in Iowa there was a sign there was a campaign a billboard campaign and the signs went something like this what is the best kept secret in Des Moines as I drove around different places I kept seeing these billboards all over the place what's the best kept secret in Des Moines I was interested what's the best kept secret in Des Moines but as I drove and I reflected on that I thought now what's the best kept secret in fundamentalism it is the personal presence of the Spirit of God in your heart he is there to enable he is there to give you the strength the ability the victory to make you like

Christ he's not just there on Sunday morning in church Sunday night in church prayer meeting he is with me every moment every day I have no excuse for failure the Spirit of God is in me what have we said this morning we said the true spirituality is being like Christ that simply it is a possibility for every one of us that it involves a two part process as I look in the book and as I am changed into the likeness of Christ and thirdly that it depends on the power of the Spirit of God it's kind of like a car I don't know much about cars and as I tell you this you'll agree I don't but I know a little bit about cars a car is a car in order to make that car go you've got to have gasoline

I understand that in order to make that gasoline come alive there's got to be a spark somewhere in the system your body is the car the gasoline is the scripture that's your fuel and obviously the Holy Spirit is a spark we don't let our cars run out of gas and we don't want our batteries to go dead because if we do we don't go anywhere so we want to be in the word and rightly adjusted to the spark of the Holy Spirit why so we can go somewhere higher ground from glory to glory for the Lord take heart you can be truly spiritual take heed do not be self satisfied do not think I have arrived at a certain point and there's no place more to go that's not true and some of us need to take stock has the veil ever been lifted so that we can become like

Christ God help us today shall we pray father father thank you for your word father the Christian faith is so beautiful may your Holy Spirit help us to understand may there be a motivation here seeing the possibility before us and understanding something of how it all works may we determine in our heart of hearts to be like Jesus wherever we are we ask it in our Savior's wonderful name amen hymn number 288 please 288 earthly pleasures vainly call me I would be like Jesus be like [53 : 52] Jesus this my song in the home and in the throng be like Jesus all day long I would be like Jesus may the Spirit of God put that desire into each of our hearts today let's stand as we sing please singing on the first verse with me earthly pleasures vainly call me I would be like Jesus not leave you